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HISTORY OF
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

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ANNA GINOUX DE FERMONT

SISTER OF CHARITY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, VICTIM OF THE FIRE AT THE CHARITY BAZAAR, PARIS MAY 4, 1897

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HISTORY OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

FOUNDER OF THE

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
(VINCENTIANS)

AND OF THE

SISTERS OF CHARITY

By MONSEIGNEUR BOUGAUD
BISHOP OF LAVAL

TRANSLATED FROM THE SECOND FRENCH EDITION BY THE
REV. JOSEPH BRADY, C.M.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HIS EMINENCE
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SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN PRESENCE OF MISERY

HISTORY OF
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

BOOK IV

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN PRESENCE OF MISERY

CHAPTER I

THE SUFFERINGS OF LORRAINE

1635–1642

WHILE Saint Vincent was labouring to form the great armies of charity of which we have been speaking, war was raging, followed, as usual then, by famine and pestilence. The most beautiful provinces of France were being devastated: Lorraine, Champagne, Burgundy, Picardy, Anjou and Orleans. Civil war soon increased the misery, till it reached the gates of Paris and the very faubourgs of the capital.

This was the origin of the war. France had reached, under Henry IV., a crisis in her history. That grand religious unity which for centuries the Church had laboured to establish, Protestantism had broken asunder. It had successively torn away England, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and a part of Germany. On the other hand, thanks to the genius of Charles V., Austria had reunited under her all that remained of that unity: Hungary, Bohemia, the Low Countries, Bavaria, Spain, Naples and Milan. Thus, Europe was divided into

Protestant and Catholic nations, and France had now to make her choice. How was she to regain her ancient grandeur? Two plans presented themselves to her, the first that of the saints, the second that of the politicians. To unite with Austria and the Catholic nations, to weaken the influence and power of the Protestant, to assist towards the restoration of Catholicism, and thus towards the re-establishment of the religious unity of Europe—this was the plan of Cardinal de Bérulle, of Saint Vincent de Paul, of M. Olier and of Blessed Peter Fourrier. In this scheme, it is true, France should not at once have taken her place among the first European Powers, but assuredly she should have done so later on, and have gained for herself and Europe the blessing of religious unity. It was a project, too, that put in practice the Gospel teaching: "*Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.*" To-day, after the lapse of three centuries, there can be no doubt that France should have gained immensely by adopting this policy of the saints.

The second scheme was altogether different: to humble, at any cost, the house of Austria, which was becoming a menace to France, to support the Protestant nations, to accord to them rights, privileges and legal recognition, but on condition that they would in return aid France, and thus build the supremacy of France on the ruins of Austria. This was the project of Henry IV., of Richelieu, of Mazarin, and of Louis XIV. It succeeded admirably, making France the first nation of the world, and winning for its advocates, notwithstanding all their faults, a glory which has not yet faded. Soon, however, the weakness of this second plan appeared. The Catholic nations have not since risen from

their humiliation, the Protestant have not ceased to grow in power, and to-day France is menaced by those very nations the foundations of whose glory she unwisely and too selfishly helped to lay.

Henry IV. died, having adopted this policy. Richelieu put it into execution, bringing to his task all the courage and determination of his character, and Mazarin, with his Italian astuteness, completed the work. To weaken Austria, Richelieu began with two masterstrokes. He advocated the claims of Gustavus-Adolphus to the Protestant throne of Sweden. This was a young hero, whose genius the Cardinal recognised, and he placed him as a menace on Austria's right flank. Looking on the other side, he saw on the throne of Lorraine the Duke Charles IV., and he endeavoured through him to threaten Austria's left flank. But Charles IV. had neither the genius nor courage of Gustavus-Adolphus. He became afraid, and asked to remain neutral, but obtaining nothing from Richelieu, he first secretly and then publicly sided with Austria. Richelieu was only biding his time, and in 1633 pounced upon him like a vulture on his prey. Charles called Austria to his aid, and thus began that terrible war which ended, no doubt, in victory for France, but only after covering the land with blood and ruins.

This war has two histories: the one external, the other internal. The first recounts the glory and the triumphs, the second the secret sorrows and the odious crimes. It is the latter that we are about to contemplate, that we may place in bold relief the divine tenderness, the inexhaustible generosity, and extraordinary wisdom of our saint.

War in the seventeenth century was very different from war in the nineteenth. In place of organised and

disciplined troops, there were hired mercenaries who lived on the enemy. The great, the only law was to strike terror into the inhabitants. Men were killed, women outraged, harvests destroyed, fruit-trees cut down, and whole districts laid waste, in order to starve out the enemy. Thus the French acted even in their own country, and how much worse in this respect were the Germans, Croats, Hungarians and Bohemians! At that time there were in Germany, Hungary and along the Danube, men who hired themselves out to fight, desperate characters, ready to kill or be killed, wild adventurers, ever eager to pillage and carry everywhere the horrors of war.

It was to these men that Austria turned, and from 1633 to 1636 they continued to pour in upon France. At first Waldstein, a sullen and savage character, secured a hundred thousand soldiers by promising them free scope for pillage and debauchery in exchange for their obedience to his orders. He occupied in turn Worms, Frankfort, the environs of Strasbourg, and finally stood before the gates of Metz. His lieutenants, as fearless as himself, went still farther. Jean de Werth came within a short distance of Notre-Dame, and the cruelties of his soldiers spread terror all over France. Piccolomini, at the head of an army of Poles, Croats and Hungarians, entered Picardy, while Gallas laid waste Burgundy.

France, thus invaded on three sides simultaneously, made heroic efforts with an army admirable on the battlefield, but not better disciplined than that of the enemy, and adopting the same tactics of wholesale destruction. Under such circumstances what was to become of the poor? The districts through which the troops did not pass were not even secure. "Large bodies of infantry and cavalry went about cutting down the harvest to sell

it, plundering every village that would not pay a large ransom, and demanding all this as a return for military service."[1] To be in the vicinity of a garrison was even a greater danger. The soldiers, generally at night, emerged from their retreat, and galloped through the country till they reached a village, which they pillaged and sometimes even burned. Having secured their booty, they galloped back as swift as Arabs, and were gone before the neighbouring villages were aware of the attack.[2] Thus for fifteen years the poor country-people were persecuted by their friends and enemies, and perhaps even more harshly by the former than by the latter.

When war was carried on in this manner, when soldiers ransacked the country, trampling the young crops under their horses' feet, cutting down the fruit-trees, and burning the mills, famine was the necessary consequence of war. It broke out in Lorraine in 1631, and in 1635 it was at its height. Forty francs a bushel would be given for corn, and yet it was not to be had. The poor died of hunger. In 1637 the people were glad to eat carcasses, and villages once thriving were now deserted. In 1640, four to five thousand poor entered Metz, and soon the place was strewn with dead and dying. Besides hunger and disease, wolves, attracted by the stench of the corpses, entered the towns and villages in full daylight, and devoured women and children. In May 1640, Pont-à-Mousson reckoned between four and five hundred poor dying of hunger. Destitution was beginning to drive the people to acts of cruelty, and the weak were sometimes made the victims of the strong. A witness relates that without divine assistance he could not have borne the sight, so

[1] Maynard, vol. iv. p. 172. [2] M. E. Fleury, p. 87.

ghastly was the appearance of the unfortunate people. A mother and her three children were seen roasting a snake and preparing to eat it. In 1642 the misery was so extreme in Lorraine that bread was never remembered to have been so dear. A similar state of things existed at Guise, where the poor were dying of hunger, and Saint-Quentin was no better. In a single house two widows, each with four children, lay on the floor without food or covering. The number who came to take refuge from the soldiers was so great that the citizens, not able to support them, determined to put them outside of the city walls.

At Laon, Verdun, and Mézières, guards were placed to refuse admittance to any who came. At Bazoches the soldiers had pillaged everything, and at Fismes and Brêmes the plague-stricken people filled the streets and houses, and were without any assistance, food or clothing; the dead and dying lay side by side, even infants on the breasts of their dead mothers. At Capelle and Catelet food was not to be had for money, so we may imagine the consequence. Laon, Vervins, and La Fère presented a dreadful spectacle. Some of the wretched victims lay covered with sores on their heads, their feet, or over their whole bodies, which gave forth an insupportable stench and rendered the sight unbearable. At Lesquielle bodies were found in a house where wolves had entered and devoured their prey. In 1651, at Rheims and Réthel, the harvest had been destroyed, no seed sown for the coming year, famine universal, and dead bodies covered the streets. The people who survived looked more like ghosts than men. At Guise the carcasses of dogs and horses were eaten, and two children were seen at Mareuil, near Soissons, devouring their dead parents. At Saint-Quentin the people tore the bark from

the trees, ate the clay, and in their agony of despair gnawed at their very selves. In Beauce two thousand two hundred were without food or clothing. Bread was not to be found in even ten of the best houses in Berry. The highest families were no better off than the lowest. Along the streets and in the fields were the wretched victims to be seen, seeking, like a herd of cattle, something to eat. At Étampes more than four hundred poor lay prostrate in the streets; at Meung, two hundred; at Beaugency, five hundred; and at Montargis, two thousand. At Lorris a mother killed her two little children for food, and afterwards strangled herself. "I have been for three weeks," writes an eye-witness, "in these provinces, and the people are dying by the hundred. They are buried in threes and fours at a time. The dead and dying lie side by side on the highway. A morsel of bread is fought for, and men and women seize upon the dead carcass of a horse for food. It is estimated that without immediate assistance, in the provinces of Orleans and of Blois alone, more than twenty thousand will die."

Famine, however, was not the worst consequence of these wars; it was pestilence. The mercenary soldiers coming from the East, the Bohemians, Croats, and Hungarians, brought the infection with them, and left it after them. The thousands of men killed and not buried, the sick imprisoned in their houses and dying of hunger, and the carcasses of horses helped to spread and keep alive the fearful malady. It attacked Lorraine, Burgundy, and Champagne in 1631, and returned again in 1633 and 1635. At Saint-Quentin in 1636, three thousand died in six months. About October of the same year the plague broke out at Beauvais and Compiègne, causing terrible destruction. In the little town of Marle, within five months, more than four hundred people died. In 1637

it visited Lorraine for the seventh time, passing from it to Burgundy, where at Auxonne alone were reckoned three thousand five hundred deaths. At Palaiseau there was not a sufficient number even to bury the dead, and Étampes was strewn with dead bodies. Normandy, which had escaped the war, did not escape the pestilence. At Rouen more than seventeen thousand persons were carried off in a very short time. "The bells," says Rotrou, "sounded for the twenty-second person who died to-day." Paris was no better off. Twenty-two doctors and a number of priests and religious were soon victims of the scourge. From Paris it passed to the country round Bordeaux, Bas-Languedoc, Avignon, Toulouse, Marseilles, Nîmes, and again to Burgundy and Lorraine.

What augmented the evil was, that no aid was to be found. Where could it come from? From the King, from the Government? No doubt Louis XIII. and Anne of Austria, as we shall see, were working wonders. But the taxes being badly collected, and the necessity of maintaining the army, prevented the Government from giving assistance. On the contrary, the Government increased the disorders by endeavouring to force payment. The collectors went about demanding money, even at the cost of violence. What could not be paid by some was imposed on others, who in their turn necessarily became poor. In 1634, in Normandy the people were constrained to sell their very clothes to pay the taxes, and the women from sheer shame absented themselves from church.[1] In Burgundy the taxes were eight times what they had been in previous years. On all sides the people were in revolt, and the collectors were powerless to secure payment. Clermont, Brioudes, Aurillac were in a state of open rebellion, and Pontoise

[1] Michelet, *Hist. de France*, vol. i. p. 150.

had its prisons full of debtors. All over France it was the same. In 1646 there were 23,000 prisoners for debt. To add to the evil, while the State demanded payment of taxes, it did not pay its own debts. This drove the most law-abiding to violence, and they threatened open pillage and plunder.

If the State, thus encumbered and practically ruined, could neither pay nor compel payment, and had become incapable of giving assistance, what could the clergy do? Far less. They more than anybody had suffered, and the land, now for more than twenty years devastated by the soldiery, yielded no harvest. Tithes were not paid. Most of the mercenaries that had invaded Lorraine, Burgundy, Picardy and Champagne were Lutherans, and madly enraged against priests and churches. In Lorraine the priests, after selling even the sacred vessels for the support of their flocks, had at last to abandon their churches and wander abroad for food. A canon of Verdun writes: "The distress has forced me to leave my church and seek a livelihood with the labour of my hands." In Picardy the Lutherans destroyed and burned the churches, till no trace remained of those noble monuments. The barbarians were delighted to expose priests to the mockery of the multitude, and often they murdered them in their houses or at the foot of the altar. At Fismes and Braine the churches were profaned and the sacred vessels and ornaments carried off. At Bazoches the Blessed Sacrament was trampled under foot, and in more than twenty-five churches in that district no worship could be held. At Ribemont, La Fère, and Vervins, most of the priests were dead or dying, and the churches burned. In the diocese of Laon alone there were a hundred parishes where all worship was suspended. The Archbishop of Rheims urgently

advocated that his province should be released from the payment of taxes. At Châlons-sur-Marne the churches were likewise destroyed, and mass could not be offered. Everywhere it was the same, and Burgundy was as badly off as Champagne and Lorraine.

The religious of both sexes were treated not less harshly than the priests. The savage soldiery delighted in burning monasteries, pillaging convents, and outraging nuns. They went as far even as to disinter the dead, as in the case of Prior Dupont. Those religious who escaped died of hunger. At Saint-Quentin the Franciscans lived for many years on herbs, and at La Fère the Benedictines were ill from hunger. The religious like the rest required alms, food and clothing, and that too for thirty years. In 1640 no less than eleven hundred religious received support.

What increased the misery was that the rich gentry had passed away. All the castles were plundered, and the land had not been sown. Even the richest could not afford to give five sous in charity, nay, they begged like the poorest. A nobleman, who asked something for his sick daughter, was told, assistance was only given to the poor. "Alas!" he replied, "I am of that number, for a cup of water is all that my daughter has had these two days."

Volumes would hardly suffice to convey an adequate idea of the desolation of these thirty years, and that in the fairest provinces of France.

The large manufactories closed one after the other. The drapery works of Lille, Armentières and Elbeuf went first, and were soon followed by the glass-works of Lorraine and Burgundy. The woollen industry of Picardy, having held out for some time, had in the end to yield, and the wine district of Champagne and

Burgundy was likewise a failure. The hospitals were unable, because of debt, to receive the poor applicants. The villages were deserted. In Burgundy, of two hundred and twelve towns and villages, twenty were entirely destroyed, and thirty had only a few persons left. Lorraine was worse still. Bonissoncourt was a desert, and so too were Pierreville, Paray, Saint-Césaire, and all the villages of Vermois. Such was the state of most of the province of Lorraine.

When we search the civil and ecclesiastical records of the time, and seek the person who brought aid to this vast population suffering at once the horrors of war, famine and pestilence, one name, and one name only, is to be found, the name of Saint Vincent de Paul. We are now about to see what a single man can do when possessed of and inspired by true charity.

CHAPTER II

SAINT VINCENT'S FIRST EFFORTS TO COMBAT MISERY

1642–1648

It was in itself a grand sight to witness a poor priest hidden away in the faubourgs of Paris, a man of sixty-six years, moved at the thought of the sufferings of provinces so far away as Burgundy, Champagne, and Lorraine. Who among the court, the clergy, or the élite of Paris were thinking of these horrors? Even the holiest persons, absorbed in their own works, do not appear to have turned their attention in this direction. Saint Vincent alone did so. But what is still more admirable is the success which attended his endeavours. The great and noble efforts of our saint, irreligious historians have endeavoured to lessen. Some pass them over in silence, while others speak of them only to minimise them. "We have witnessed," writes Michelet, "the inadequacy of the aid brought by that excellent man, Vincent de Paul."[1] No doubt he did not dry every eye, he did not fill every mouth, but his hands were still full when the coffers of the State were exhausted, and we shall see every province rise up one after the other and proclaim him their benefactor, their deliverer, and the father of his country.[2]

What was wanted above everything else was money. Fortunately Saint Vincent had the purse of the Ladies' Assembly at his disposal, and this he generously drew

[1] Michelet, *Hist. de France*, vol. xii. p. 280. [2] Feillet, p. 248.

upon. We have few details of these first charities from 1633 to 1639. Nothing was written about them, as it was thought the misery could not last. In 1639 so much was given away in the early part of the year that the wants of the people could no longer be satisfied in the latter half. In 1640 better provision was made. Five hundred livres a month were given to the following towns: Nancy, Verdun, Metz, Toul, Bar-le-Duc, and in this way two thousand five hundred a month or thirty thousand livres a year were distributed. Soon Saint-Michiel and Saint-Quentin were added. At Verdun for three years bread was distributed to five or six hundred poor. At Saint-Quentin nine hundred livres were given away every week, that is, over forty-six thousand livres a year. It was the same at Ribemont and La Fère. In 1650 it was necessary even to increase this grant, and it reached seventy-two thousand livres a year. In January 1651, Lorraine was receiving three thousand livres a week. About March, Saint Vincent wrote: "It is incredible with what difficulty these ladies sustained the burden of such expense; it reached one hundred and eighty thousand livres a year. According as we advance, the expense increases with the number of provinces that are invaded." At Saint-Quentin nine hundred livres a week were not sufficient, and Réthel and Marle received sixty thousand livres a month. Saint Vincent computed that Laon received, from 15th July 1650 to 11th July 1657, no less a sum than three hundred and sixty-seven thousand five hundred livres. Moreover, that amount does not include clothing and church furniture, which would raise the total very considerably. Large sums, too, were given in Burgundy, Lorraine, and the environs of Paris, of which he does not speak. When this terrible war was ended, Mgr. François Hébert,

Bishop of Agen, computed that Saint Vincent de Paul gave in charity the enormous sum of twelve million livres, that is to say, nearly one million pounds sterling of our actual money. Saint Vincent, who always gave the honours to others, says in praise of this fact: "O ladies, does not the recital of these things move you? Are you not touched with gratitude for God's goodness towards you and those afflicted people? Providence deigned to make use of some ladies in Paris to succour the desolated provinces. Does not this strike you as new? No country possesses a precedent for it; no, it was a heroism reserved for you, and for those who have gone from amongst you, to receive an ample reward for their exalted charity."

When the exchequer of the Ladies of Charity was exhausted, as happened from time to time, the saint struck on the bold enterprise of appealing to the great ladies of Paris: the Duchess d'Aiguillon, niece of Richelieu, the Presidente de Herse, Mlle. de Lamoignon, Mme. de Bretonvilliers, and last, but by no means least, Mlle. le Gras, on whose purse Saint Vincent confidently and constantly relied. He applied to the Queen of Poland, who sent him twelve thousand francs, and finally he appealed to the Queen-Regent and was not refused. For want of money she sent her jewels. The first time it was a diamond, valued at seven thousand livres, and again ear-rings, which were sold by the Ladies of Charity for eighteen thousand livres. Asking, like a Christian princess, that her gift might be kept secret, Saint Vincent replied: "Your Majesty must pardon me if I obey not in this. I cannot conceal so noble an act of charity. It is well, madame, that all Paris, nay, all France, should know it, and I feel bound to publish it everywhere I can." [1]

[1] Maynard, vol. iv. p. 233.

Saint Vincent de Paul did not stop here. There were others who had more money than the Queen; there was the public. Our saint conceived the courageous idea of using the press in favour of charity. His missioners, spread over the scene of war, sent most touching accounts of the sufferings. These the saint had published, and distributed at the church doors. Soon they became periodicals, appearing every month, and read with such eagerness that the first numbers had to be reprinted. "God has so blessed this undertaking," writes the saint, "that many have largely contributed towards the assistance of the suffering." "These accounts have been spread all over the kingdom, and are undoubtedly the greatest success."

A paper even was founded called the *Magazine of Charity*, with the express object of promoting a great movement of charity.

While working at this undertaking the saint had also applied to the Archbishop to issue a pastoral to be read in all the churches of Paris, and which, as a matter of fact, produced wonderful fruit. He likewise wrote to all the bishops with whom he was acquainted, and finally brought out himself a little work entitled *Instructions How to Assist the Poor*. Writing was little to his taste, but this book, filled with quotations from the Holy Scripture and the Fathers, was admirable, and gave birth to many others, including one by Antoine Godeau, Bishop of Grasse, and another, *The Charitable Christian*, by the Jesuit Bonnefonds. Thus by the example of a single man, those throughout France who were not afflicted themselves came to the assistance of their suffering fellow-countrymen.

To collect money was not enough; it was necessary to bring it to the afflicted people, and lastly, to distribute

it prudently. For this object Saint Vincent had his two armies, the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity. He sent them in groups with orders to divide on the battlefield, and to labour in the most afflicted districts. Soon they were to be seen at Metz, Verdun, Nancy, Pont-à-Mousson, Bar-le-Duc, Saint-Mihiel, and later at Étampes, Palaiseau, and Richelieu. The grateful people left in the records of their cities and towns an expression of their indebtedness to the saint. After a while he gathered the missioners together again, and placed ten or fifteen under a superior in different places. To these he sent visitors, who made a report of the state of the district, so that charity might be given proportionate to the need. He acted in the same manner with the Sisters of Charity, sending them in twos and threes to the most dangerous places, encouraging the weak, and praising those who died "sword in hand," as he used to say. In fine, he spared nothing to communicate to others the fire of charity, of which his own heart was a furnace.

The letters which he received from the missioners were most depressing, but the saint's courage never faltered. Soon by his orders, after the experience of the first years, they adopted a regular plan of campaign to arrest the misery. This consisted of four points :—

1. To rescue those who were dying of starvation. For this end he instituted the work of cheap soup dinners. One is touched in reading the details into which he went.

"To feed a hundred poor, a large vessel was to be procured, containing five cans of water, in which was to be cut up twenty-five pounds of bread, two pounds of dripping (or of butter on days of abstinence), four pints of peas or other vegetables, and the whole cooked and distributed among the poor, according to their necessity."

These dinners, which saved thousands, were distributed by the Sisters of Charity. At Guise they were without the utensils necessary for making the soup, and for fifteen days sought in vain to establish the work. At first three hundred received this assistance, but soon the number increased to six and seven hundred, and included some of the highest families in the district. At Saint-Quentin the work was begun with what was required merely to feed two hundred, but after a few days there were fifteen hundred applicants. Besides soup, bread and meat was given at Laon, and at Bazoches the Sisters of Charity distributed soup and other assistance to no less than twelve hundred. They spent three thousand livres per week in supporting the poor of Rheims, Réthel, Boult-sur-Suippe, Sommepy, and Donchery. They established six soup kitchens at Étampes, where there were crowds of poor and sick, without even a cup of water to quench their burning thirst. In the faubourgs of Paris soup was given daily to ten thousand poor at a cost of sixteen hundred livres per month.

2. But of what avail was it to feed the hungry and to comfort the sick, as long as the towns and villages, the highways and the fields, were strewn with dead bodies of men, women, and beasts, which gave forth an insupportable odour? A company of men was formed, with the missioners at their head, to bury the dead. Terrible work, in which not a few missioners and Sisters of Charity lost their lives! At Réthel close on two thousand bodies were buried in a very short time. One of the missioners, Father Deschamps, was conspicuous by his labours in this work. At Étampes the missioners relieved the streets of heaps of carcasses which were infecting the air with a terrible stench, and afterwards disinfected the houses to render them fit dwellings.

Here five of the missioners and five of the Sisters of Charity died, "sword in hand." At Etrechy, Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, and Saint-Etienne, over three hundred sick were reduced to the last extremity, having no food, bedding, nor clothing. The first thing to be done was to bury the dead in order to arrest the spread of disease. At Saint-Etienne fifteen hundred lay dead on the battlefield, and these the missioners buried. Fortunately the cold weather continued, for otherwise men could not be induced to undertake the work. On one occasion Saint Vincent had to assemble the Ladies of Charity and appeal to them for means to buy spades and pickaxes to dig graves, telling them that this was one of the most trying duties of the missioners. At Villeneuve-Saint-Georges from twelve to fifteen hundred dead horses, not to speak of men and women, had to be interred. At Étampes the last moments of a Sister of Charity were signalised by an extraordinary act of heroism. "Some time ago," says Saint Vincent, "a sister on the point of death, seeing a poor person in need of being bled, rose from her death-bed to give assistance, and then died of the effort. Sister Mary Joseph was her name, and indeed it is well for her, she may be called a martyr of charity." There, too, occurred the death of our missioner, Father David. "Providence has called to Himself," writes Saint Vincent, "Father David, of whom it may be said in a short time *explevit tempora multa*. He was only ten or fifteen days assisting the poor and sick of Étampes when he fell a victim to his heroic work. Father Deschamps, who was with him, says that an angel from heaven could not do more for the afflicted people in hearing confessions, teaching catechism, and burying the dead. This noble soul when on the point of death, and thinking of the justice of God,

exclaimed, 'No matter, Lord, should you even condemn me, I shall not cease to love you, though in hell.'" Some time before this Father de Montevit, a young missioner, died in the odour of sanctity at Bar-le-Duc, and of his death Father Roussel wrote: "He died as I hope and pray I may die. Great honour was shown to his remains, but perhaps the greatest tribute was a crowd of six or seven hundred poor who followed them, torch in hand, to the grave. It was a debt of gratitude they owed him, for it was while relieving their misery he contracted the malady that took away his life. He heard confessions so constantly that, as far as I know, he never once even took the relaxation of a walk. We buried him near his confessional, where he met his death, and won in heaven the merit he now enjoys."

3. While the dead were being interred and the air purified of its fetid odours, Saint Vincent, who thought of everything, was engaged in procuring seed for the land. He amassed provisions of corn, barley, beans, and distributed them everywhere. In 1650, within two months, he sent twenty thousand livres' worth of seed. The next year he spent almost forty thousand livres on the same object, experience having shown him it was the best form of charity.

4. But above this corporal misery, what was engaging the attention of Saint Vincent, his heroic disciples, and the noble Sisters of Charity, was the terrible danger and misery of souls. Worship was interrupted, churches plundered, thousands dying without the sacraments, and the young exposed to the most degrading examples of vice. Nothing was respected, and fallen nature was manifesting in all its hideousness its evil inclinations. Women and young girls fled to the woods and caves for shelter, but were pursued torch in hand. They plunged

into icy rivers, and hid themselves in lonely places, to escape the brutal instincts of man. But all in vain. At Laon noble ladies and their daughters were banded with village and shepherd girls and driven into the camp to satiate the lust of a brutal soldiery. In vain they tried to escape and hide themselves in the woods. At Bazoches, a witness writes : "I dare not relate the treatment to which the women are being subjected, but I shall say it to their praise, that they lose their lives to preserve their honour."

When the war was ended the women and young girls emerged, scantily clad, from their hiding places. This news went straight to the heart of Saint Vincent, who multiplied letters to his missioners urging them to send these wretched females to Paris, where his charity secured for them situations. The orphans were forwarded to him also, and he placed them in the hands of Mlle. le Gras. Saint-Quentin alone furnished no less than five hundred children under the age of seven, and Béthune and Berry as many more.

It would almost seem incredible, yet even the servants of the poor, the Priests of the Mission, and the noble Sisters of Charity were not secure in the midst of these terrible disorders. The money and other assistance which they were bringing to the sick and destitute were torn from them, and fierce violence used if they resisted. Saint Vincent informed the Queen-Regent of this, and she, resolving to protect these self-sacrificing men and women, issued a royal proclamation, which at once manifests the feebleness of the civil authority and the power of charity. This is the proclamation in its entirety :—

"By Royal Authority.

"His Majesty having been informed that, in consequence of the pillaging of the enemy, the inhabitants of Picardy and Champagne are in a state of extreme misery, the churches desecrated, and the sacred ornaments sold to purchase sustenance for the poor, many noble-hearted persons in Paris have given large sums in charity, which are distributed among the most distressed districts by the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity. While doing this, however, the soldiery stationed in the parts where they go, have attacked them and robbed them of the assistance destined for the poor, so that without His Majesty's guarantee it is impossible for these noble workers to accomplish their design. His Majesty, desiring to do all he can for his afflicted people, wishes that all governors, military officers, both cavalry and infantry, as well French as foreign, be strictly commanded to prevent those actively engaged in the war from remaining on the frontier of Picardy and Champagne, or in any way impeding the Priests of the Mission in their charitable efforts to bring provisions to the afflicted people, so that full liberty may be given to them to labour where and as they please. His Majesty further commands that nothing shall be taken from these Priests of the Mission, or from the Sisters of Charity employed by them, under penalty of life. His Majesty takes them under his special protection, and expressly enjoins all civil and military authorities to immediately publish this royal ordinance, and promptly punish its contravention, so that an example may be made. His Majesty wishes that copies of this warrant, when duly collated, shall have the same force as the original.

"Given at Paris, Feb. 14, 1551."

"How is it," remarks M. Feillet, "that so important a proclamation, and of which so many copies were made, has escaped the notice of all the biographers of the saint and of all the historians of the Fronde? We shall not inquire the reason, but merely say that it is the most important document we met in our researches. Let us weigh its several points: the acknowledgment of the misery, the barbarity of the soldiers, even going so far as to attack those who brought aid, and the solemn warning to the civil and military authorities to protect and assist the heroic men who were bringing assistance to the desolated provinces. We shall see later on what that protection was. By this warrant Saint Vincent de Paul ceases to act as a private individual, and becomes the royal Almoner-General, to whom is bequeathed the noblest gift of all—the power to do good. The humble peasant of the Landes by his charity became the strongest support of the kingdom in its hour of trial, and merited to be called by the Governor of Saint-Quentin the father of his country."[1]

This is not the only testimony that is borne to the work of Saint Vincent and his priests. Many other documents are to be found, but here we shall only mention a few of the principal ones.

In 1639 the Governor of Saint-Mihiel and the Vicar-General of Toul paid the highest tribute to the labours of the Priests of the Mission. In 1640, Metz, Verdun, and Pont-à-Mousson placed on record their debt of gratitude to Saint Vincent, and the following year Rheims, Lunéville, and Saint-Quentin publicly acknowledged all they owed to the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity.

These and many other public expressions of thanks

[1] Feillet, *La Misère au Temps de la Fronde*, p. 247.

prove that the charity of Saint Vincent de Paul was not forgotten. Moreover, when after fifty years the process of the saint's canonisation was begun, the bishops of the provinces which he had relieved were among the first to petition the Pope to place on the altars of the Church him who had been their benefactor and protector, nay, the "Father of his country."

CHAPTER III

THE FRONDE—THE MISERY INCREASES—SAINT VINCENT'S EFFORTS TO RESTORE PEACE

1648–1652

AMID so much sorrow and bloodshed, Mazarin was beginning to realise the great scheme conceived by Henry IV. and pursued by Richelieu, namely, to break down Austria, and secure for France those fortresses on the Rhine which were necessary for her independence. Condé had gained a victory over the Spaniards at Lens on October 24, 1648, and the consequence was the treaty of Westphalia. By this treaty France acquired Metz, Toul and Verdun (which she had for a long time occupied), the whole of Alsace, leaving, however, Strasbourg free, but taking Brisach, Landau, and the right to garrison Philippsbourg. Thus France gained an entrance, if necessary, into Italy, and secured her north-eastern frontier."[1]

This treaty was dearly purchased. By it the independence and sovereignty of the Protestant nations were recognised, and heresy received that social existence which was subsequently to break down the Catholic unity of Europe. At the time the exaltation of France was the consolation for all this. The success on the north-eastern frontier was expected to be soon followed by similar success on the north-western, and under Condé and Turenne it was anticipated that the Low

[1] Cousin, *Madame de Longueville*, vol. i. p. 329.

Countries should be compelled to yield that frontier of the Rhine, without which France, if defeated, might see her enemy under the walls of Paris. Thus free on the north, Navarre, Roussillon, and even Catalonia, were to be held on the south, and this together with Savoy and Nice should complete the circuit which was necessary for the greatness of France.

If Mazarin had been content with following out this plan he should probably have realised it. But while seeking to humble Spain and Austria, he was pursuing another object far more intricate, which his immortal predecessor had bequeathed to him, but for which he was ill suited. This was to destroy all remnants of feudalism, to weaken the nobility and gentry, and subject all if possible to the royal authority.

Mazarin, though not adopting the violent tactics of Richelieu, lost no opportunity of furthering this scheme, and in consequence provoked much discontent in all ranks of society. Some of the accusations brought against him were, however, unfair; for example, the various measures he employed to get money—increased taxation, sale of public offices, and new expenses. But at a time when taxes were so unequally fixed, and so many exempted from payment, how could he be expected to carry on war, to support armies, and enrich France, if he had not money? He took it then, and that caused an outcry; for glory and grandeur are not sufficient to appease misery. Hence everywhere there were murmurs, even attempts at revolt, which the Parliament, exasperated by the continual imposition of new burdens, fell into the lamentable error of encouraging and embittering. At the head of these, with still greater folly, were the great lords, even princes of royal blood, less zealous for the true interests of France than blindly

attached to their own. These repeated agitations were known as the wars of the Fronde. From 1648–1652 they succeeded the foreign troubles, divided France, and retarded for many a year the realisation of Henry IV. and Richelieu's great plan.

The Fronde must never be compared with the Ligne. The latter was one of the noblest outbursts of Catholic France, inspired by the principle of religious unity, and at once called forth noble characters before whom Henry IV. had to yield.

It was not so with the Fronde. There was no principle at stake, no good result to be obtained. It was a strife of personal ambitions and interests, a tardy regret for the past, and an ungenerous forecast of the future. It was the last effort of feudalism. By its faults and its follies it brought about what it endeavoured to prevent, namely, the abasement of the nobility, which unhappy class, now that it was conquered, by its enfeeblement prepared the way for the despotism of Louis XIV.

How did Saint Vincent act during this trouble? He was intimately acquainted with a number of great lords and ladies who were mixed up with it. Did he espouse their quarrel? He did not admire Mazarin, but did he oppose him? He had the confidence of the Queen, but how did he use it? We presume to say we have deeply studied the life of Saint Vincent de Paul, and rarely is his character more admirable than in the disinterestedness which he manifested at this period. From the first day of the Fronde to the last, he sacrificed his dearest interests, his name, his works, his twofold family of charity, and animated with one thought alone, he laboured constantly to lessen misery and restore peace.

The Fronde began in August 1648. A few hours after the arrest of some of the ringleaders, barricades

were erected in the streets of Paris, and the mob shouted, "Down with Mazarin." The Queen, in terror, turned in her distress to Condé, the victor of Rocroy and Lens. He, though hating what he called the disloyalty of Mazarin, and the feebleness of the Queen, immediately placed his sword at her service. Reassured by his assistance, she left Paris with her son, and withdrew to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, while Condé at the head of 8000 men began the blockade of the capital. Saint Vincent was horror-stricken at this news. What was to become of the city, filled as it was with the sick and dying, if the operations were to last any time? After much prayer and reflection, he resolved upon a bold step, but one worthy of his character. He determined to leave Paris secretly, make his way through the disordered bands that surrounded it, and go straight to Saint-Germain, where he should endeavour to prevail on the Queen and Mazarin to raise the siege and restore peace. In so agitated a period it was a dangerous undertaking. Saint Vincent might become the enemy and the victim of either party or of both. He knew this full well, but duty spoke, and his heart re-echoed its voice. He took, however, every precaution, and left a letter for Molé, the President, in which "he begged him to assure the Assembly that his only object in going to Saint-Germain was to bring about peace, and that the reason why he had not called upon him before leaving was, that he might be in a position to tell the Queen that he approached her solely on his own responsibility and without any influence on the part of others."

The saint left Paris on the night of January 14, 1649, and in consequence of the outposts that guarded the city, his journey to Saint-Germain was a very circuitous one. He rode accompanied by a lay-brother named

Ducourneau. It was not yet day when they reached Clichy, and at the sound of the horses the travellers were accosted with fixed bayonets. But soon the former curé of Clichy was recognised, and threats were changed to shouts of welcome and of joy. At Neuilly, a little farther on, the Seine had overflowed and covered the bridge ; here a new danger arose for the hero of charity. They begged him not to attempt to cross, but urged by the gravity of his mission, he trusted to Providence and safely reached the other side. "I trembled with fear," writes his companion, "but I felt that God would guard a man who risked his own life for the sake of the poor."

On reaching Saint-Germain he was immediately ushered into the presence of the Queen, to whom he spoke in the most moving terms of the state of Paris. "Is it just, madame," said he, "that a million who are innocent should die of hunger for twenty or thirty who are guilty ? Think of the miseries that will befall your people, of the ruins, the sacrileges, and the profanations that civil war brings in its train ! And all this, for what ? To retain one who is an object of public hatred. If the presence of Cardinal Mazarin is a source of trouble to the State, are you not bound to dispense with him, at least for awhile ?" The Queen promised to do all she could to mitigate the severity of the siege, and to allow supplies to enter the city ; but as to the rest she recommended the saint to treat with Mazarin. Saint Vincent left the presence of the Queen, and immediately appeared before the great Cardinal, with whom he spent a long time, speaking with gentleness, yet with determination. He went even so far as to say: "Your Eminence, yield to circumstances ; cast yourself into the waves rather than wreck the vessel of the State."—"This is a speech that is very daring," quietly responded Mazarin, "and

language which nobody has hitherto presumed to use. Nevertheless, I shall yield if M. le Tellier agrees."

The clever Cardinal knew well that M. le Tellier, who owed him everything, would not have the same courage, and, as a matter of fact, things remained as they were. It was the first time that the thought of exile was forced on the Prime Minister. He was deeply wounded, and it is said he never forgave Saint Vincent. The latter left the court threatened with disgrace, but with a heart at ease from the consciousness of having done his duty. He remarked to his companion: "What I have said to the Queen and Cardinal is what I should wish to say to them were it the hour of my death."

While Saint Vincent was thus incurring disfavour at court, he saw himself becoming an object of hatred and calumny to the other party. Notwithstanding all his precautions, his visit to Saint-Germain was misconstrued. It was said that he was in league with the Queen and Mazarin, against whom the indignation of the people knew no bounds. They attacked even their moral character. It was hardly to be wondered at, they said, that the Queen sacrificed everything, even France, to Mazarin, since she had unworthy relations with him. Some, not wishing to go so far, said they were privately married, and that Saint Vincent de Paul had approved and blessed the marriage.[1] This even appeared in the papers, where too it was said that Mazarin was one of the Queen's lovers.

We shall not descend to discuss this insult. Saint Vincent was not the man to act that rôle, and the Queen was far above asking him. Her Spanish character gave her freer manners than were customary in France, and her enthusiastic admiration of Mazarin

[1] Chantelauze, *Les Gondi*, p. 310.

may have led her to write and speak less discreetly than was desirable. But her heart was always pure. Of this we have excellent testimony in the memoirs of Mme. de Brienne, one of the ladies of honour.

"It may be, I shall not dispute it, that the Queen imprudently manifested her esteem of Mazarin. Although she was absolutely innocent, yet the world, ever inclined to misjudge, eagerly believed what was untrue. The Queen's gallantry, if such it should be called, was altogether elevated and passing. She was Spanish in her manner, which attracted all by its charm, but never received a stain. This is what my mother led me to believe. The Queen, who loved her tenderly, was even approached one day by her on this delicate question. This is how it came about. It was at the time when Mazarin was in greatest favour at court, and the world, as I have said, ever eager for calumny, was gossiping about the mutual relations of the Queen and her minister. Mme. de Brienne had retired one evening, as usual, into the royal chapel. Soon after the Queen entered, and not perceiving anybody, she continued praying till suddenly a slight noise attracted her attention and she recognised my mother. 'Oh, is it you, Mme. de Brienne?' said Her Majesty. 'Come, let us pray together, and our prayers will be the more acceptable.' When they had finished, my mother asked the Queen might she speak frankly about the Cardinal. Her Majesty embraced her cordially and commanded her to begin. My mother, with exquisite tact, but with perfect candour, then disclosed the state of public feeling and opinion. As she did so the Queen blushed deeply, and in the end exclaimed: 'Why, my dear Mme. de Brienne, did you not tell me this sooner? I acknowledge I am attached to him, I may say tenderly

so, but I am not in love with him. If I am, my senses have no share in it, my mind alone is charmed with the beauty of his. Is that criminal? Do not deceive me; if even in that there is the shadow of a stain, this moment before God and the relics of His saints here present I renounce it. I will never speak to him but of affairs of State, and should he introduce others I will depart.' My mother, still on her knees, caught the Queen's hand, and placing it on the altar, said, 'Swear, madame, to act as you have said.'—'I swear it,' replied the Queen, at the same time resting her hand on the altar, 'and may God punish me if I am in the least guilty.'—'Ah! that is going too far,' responded my mother amid her tears; 'God is just, and fear not but that His goodness will in time make known your innocence.' They both resumed their prayer, and she from whom I heard this fact, which, now that the Queen has received her recompense in heaven, I have thought it my duty not to pass over in silence, told me often that they never prayed more fervently. When they had finished, Mme. de Brienne implored Her Majesty to remain silent about their conversation, and, as a matter of fact, she never spoke of it even to the Cardinal, which to my mind is in itself a grand proof of her innocence."[1]

These things only came to be known afterwards. In the meanwhile Paris hated Mazarin, despised the Queen, and denounced Saint Vincent de Paul. Threats were soon turned to deeds, and on January 18, five days after the saint's leaving Saint-Germain, eight hundred soldiers broke into Saint-Lazare and pillaged and destroyed what they found.

Under these circumstances Saint Vincent thought it

[1] Cousin, *Madame de Hautefort*, p. 90.

more prudent not to return to the capital. He had failed in his mission, and his life would have been in danger. He resolved, therefore, to use this opportunity and make a visitation of the houses of his Congregation and of the Sisters of Charity. Thus he went to Villepreux, Étampes, Orleans, Mans, Angers, Rennes, Nantes, Luçon, and Richelieu, where he fell dangerously ill.

The following extract shows us how Saint Vincent acted during these journeys :—

"The inhabitants of Val-Puyseau having no seed, he procured it for them, as well as money, clothing, and implements with which to work. To give labour to all, he had roads and ditches made which otherwise would not have been done. He paid double the value of land, simply for charity's sake. To assist the poor people he brought and supported for more than ten years the Sisters of Charity. All this has been attested in the process of his canonisation."[1] In this way Saint Vincent went about from place to place everywhere doing good.

Meanwhile Condé was urging on the siege of Paris. Saint Vincent, from the heart of the provinces, where he was labouring, watched every phase of the movement. The Queen had promised that corn should be allowed into the city, but her orders were not carried out. Saint Vincent wrote to her : "Madame, all Paris rejoiced to hear of your goodness, but sorrow soon succeeded joy when it was known that not even in Villette and Chapelle, which are a quarter of a league from Paris, would your gracious permission be respected by the soldiers. I most humbly beg your Majesty to grant me permission to make known that it is the royal wish that private property should be respected, and those who have sown should be allowed to reap their harvest. Moreover, if

[1] Maynard, vol. iv. p. 30.

your Majesty would deign to remove the interference it would show the people that they are nearer to your heart than they think." In consequence of the neglect of this order the famine soon became unbearable. "You know," writes Saint Vincent, March 4, 1649, "the losses we are sustaining, not only of the corn at Orsigny and Saint-Lazare, but even of our revenue, so largely dependent on the coaches, as in Saint-Lazare and the Collège des Bons-Enfants, where there are only seven or eight priests, eighteen students, and a few lay-brothers. Even with so little corn they manage to distribute every day three or four measures to the poor, which is a great consolation, and a reason for hoping that God will not abandon us."

Forced by the famine, Paris opened its gates. Peace was signed at Rüel on March 11, and ratified by Parliament, April 1. On August 18, the Queen and her son, accompanied by Condé and Mazarin, made their solemn entry into the capital. People thought that these two great men were united for ever, and from their union a lasting peace was to follow. Alas! the most terrible of all the civil wars was close at hand. The Queen, as if she had a presentiment of it, at once wrote to Saint Vincent to return to Paris, for she had need of his counsel. Unhappily, he lay ill at Richelieu, and was unable to return, and perhaps prevent the misfortunes which were about to happen.

Condé was the greatest general of his time, but it must be admitted that his political talent was not equal to his military genius. He now found himself in the midst of intrigue and passion, influenced by his sister the Duchess of Longueville, whom he tenderly loved, by his brother the young Prince de Conti, and his brother-in-law the Duke of Longueville. Under their

influence he began to feel his old sentiments of dislike towards Mazarin, and manifested a coolness for the Queen. "Though as yet innocent," says Bossuet, he let it be clearly seen that he sympathised with the Fronde. Mazarin, who saw through his action, suddenly pounced upon him, and by a stroke of genius or of folly, the hero of Rocroy and Lens, the first prince of royal blood, together with his brother the Prince de Conti and his brother-in-law the Duke de Longueville, were summarily arrested and confined within the dungeon of Vincennes. Soon after, fearing they might escape, they were transferred to the castle of Havre. How can we paint the horror of the capital, the indignation of Parliament, and the fury of the nobility at this proceeding? Parliament at once ordered the release of the prisoners, and the immediate banishment of Mazarin. The Queen refused to be separated from her minister, and for thirteen months (January 18, 1650, to February 6, 1651) the Cardinal fought against the storm. With what adroitness, but with what disregard for the most sacred things, was this strife kept up! Bishoprics, abbeys, even churches, were all given away to the most unworthy applicants, in order to gain partisans. We may imagine the anxiety among the ecclesiastics and laity who witnessed the recent labours for the reformation of the Church in France. What was to become of all that had been done to reanimate and purify the clergy, the Tuesday Conferences, the annual retreats, and seminaries, if, after all, inferior bishops and unworthy abbés were appointed? Saint Vincent more than anybody keenly deplored the situation, and many times went on bended knees before the Queen, conjuring her to think of God and the salvation of her soul. Père de Gondi came from his austere retreat for the same object, and re-

minded his Queen of the pillage and indignities to which she was exposing the Church. The saintly Bishops of Lisieux and Beauvais, both members of the Council of Conscience, likewise added their protestations. M. Olier, and many of the most distinguished ladies of society, including the Duchess d'Aiguillon, the Marchioness de Meignelais, Mme. de Hautefort and others, also joined with Saint Vincent in supplicating Her Majesty. But Mazarin was inflexible. Forced on every side, he determined to annihilate what he called the party of devotees. The Bishop of Lisieux was sent back to his diocese, Father de Gondi was ordered not to appear at court, and the French Ambassador at the Vatican was instructed to cancel an application which had already been made to obtain the Cardinal's hat for the Bishop of Beauvais, who was also commanded to return to his see. "The absence of the Bishops of Lisieux and Beauvais from the Council of Conscience left Mazarin with only Saint Vincent as an opponent. Not succeeding in overcoming our saint, he was at last forced to temporarily suspend the council, which afterwards was only rarely convoked."[1] Thus free, he continued his nominations, and in the end literally did as he pleased.

Neither the Queen's piety nor the entreaties of the most holy persons would have prevailed, had not the indignation of Parliament, of the nobility, and even of the masses, risen to such a pitch that Mazarin lost courage and hastily left Paris for Havre. On reaching the castle he announced to the princes in person their release, thinking that this would in some measure propitiate them. But Condé received him with disdain, and the Cardinal felt he should leave France and seek refuge in Cologne. In the meanwhile the princes returned to

[1] Cousin, p. 299.

Paris, and were greeted by the populace enthusiastically shouting, "Long live the King! long live the princes! down with Mazarin!"

We must insert here M. Olier's beautiful letter to the Queen-Regent, now in a state of desolation on the departure of Mazarin:—

"Madame, your graciousness in confiding to me that you were not making good use of the trials God had sent you, has emboldened me to address you now. In doing so I am actuated only by your confidence in me and the sincerity of my intentions for your welfare. Here are the dispositions in which you ought to establish your mind during these troubled times, in order that you may profit by adversity.

"Resign yourself, and see the justice of God in the withdrawal of the person on whom you relied. Providence has ordained this for reasons not known to us, and we must only adore His designs in a spirit of faith.

"Recall that passage in Holy Scripture where our Lord rebukes a spiritual king for falling away from his first fervour: '*I shall destroy your kingdom, if you do not humble yourself. Repent and renew the works you did in the beginning of your reign.*' Madame, resume the spirit of our Lord, which ought to reign in you, and through you in those who are under you. Rekindle your first fervour. You entered on your regency with an ardent desire to see God reign in His Church; you took every precaution in the selection of bishops, as you were bound in conscience to do. God sees that this is no longer the case, because you left the nomination to a person who has neither zeal nor courage to resist what is wrong. The evils resulting from this abuse can only be known on the Day of Judgment, as also the loss of

so many souls, one of which is infinitely more precious than all the kingdoms of the earth. The end God has in view in calling men to fill these offices is that they may honour and serve Him as faithful ministers and labour for the salvation of souls. To procure this end ought to be your endeavour. Because the minister to whom you entrusted so important a duty as that of conferring benefices and appointing bishops, has acted unworthily, God has taken him away from you, in order to let you see anew your grave obligation. Adore in this action the mercy of God. He has deigned to remove that obstacle to your salvation, and afford you once more an opportunity of benefiting and sanctifying your kingdom by nominating worthy ecclesiastics.

"Endure, madame, with patience and resignation the absence of your minister. Thank God for having disengaged you from the sad state in which you were, although through the fault of another. Suffer then this trial, first to satisfy your obligation, and also to repair as far as you can so many nominations which were not weighed in the scales of the sanctuary. On this depends the honour of God in His Church, the salvation of many souls, and in particular your own eternal welfare. Let no one make you place your salvation in danger. Fill the vacancies and make the nominations yourself, after weighing the merits of the candidates and taking the advice of prudent men. Thus worthy persons shall be promoted, and you shall be ready to meet the importunities of courtiers. Never yield to them, for you are never permitted to expose your own salvation, so many souls and the glory of God to such a risk. Be determined, and do not relax for any human consideration whatever. God will then take special care of you, if you are faithful to Him. He will guard you in your

kingdom, if you preserve His honour in the kingdom of His Church.

"My profession not allowing me to take part in worldly matters, I am confining myself to what concerns the clergy. This sad state of things makes one even yearn to be released from the sight of it, and it is for that reason I presume to speak so openly. I am confident, however, that it is your Majesty's wish that her servant and subject should express his sentiments, especially when they are that God may reign in her heart, and through her in the hearts of all her subjects."

Unfortunately the time is past when even the humblest priest could thus address his sovereign. Saint Vincent de Paul, who had urged Père de Gondi to visit the Queen, can hardly have been ignorant of this letter, no more than of the numerous efforts made with the same purpose by so many pious and distinguished persons. The Queen felt herself in the midst of daily increasing discontent, and she had no one to help her, for Condé she would not trust. Menaced by the intrigues of Mme. de Longueville and Mme. de Chevreuse, she trembled for the destiny of her young son, and felt her only security lay in the genius of Mazarin. She was determined to remove the abuses complained of, but it was for him to return and restore order. Having secretly communicated with him, Mazarin hastily raised an army and came with ten thousand men. The fury of the Fronde knew no bounds on learning of his arrival. Parliament declared him guilty of high treason, and that he should be dispossessed of his property, part of which was ordered to be sold to realise a hundred and fifty livres, a reward for the person who should capture him living or dead.[1]

[1] Feillet, p. 319.

It is now that Mazarin's genius appears. Alone, against all, he did not hesitate for a moment, but continued his march, and effected a junction with the royal forces under Turenne. Condé commanded the troops for the Fronde, and then began that series of renowned marches and counter-marches, of which Bossuet speaks in the following terms: "What endurance! what courage! what danger and what resource! Were there ever two men so much alike in power, yet with characters so different, nay, almost opposite? The one seemed to act after deep reflection, the other by a sudden inspiration. The latter quick, but not precipitate; the former cold and calculating, yet not procrastinating, readier to act than to speak, resolute even when seemingly embarrassed. Condé from the very beginning showed signs of greatness, but advanced by degrees to the eminence he attained. Turenne seemed as one inspired, and from his very first engagement placed himself on a level with the most consummate military genius. The one by his ready and constant efforts won admiration and silenced envy, the other by his very brilliancy precluded attack. Turenne, by the greatness of his genius and the incredible resource of his courage, escaped the greatest dangers, and profited even by the adversities of fate. Condé, by his birth, his almost preternatural talent, and an instinct unknown to ordinary men, seemed born to fashion fortune and make destiny his own."[1]

These marches and operations soon brought the two adversaries together before the gates of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Condé found himself between the army of Turenne and the walls of Paris, which were closed to him. It was a terrible situation. At this point the

[1] Bossuet, vol. xii. pp. 627, 628.

Duchess of Montpensier, a lady of royal blood, being the granddaughter of Henry IV., niece of Louis XIII. and cousin of Louis XIV., directed the guns of the Bastille to be turned on the King's troops, and by this manœuvre Condé was afforded an entry into Paris. By this terrible act she killed her own husband, and cut off all chance of a royal alliance. Far from saving France, she plunged it into still deeper misery. Condé entered the capital all blood-stained and covered with dust, but forgetful of himself he anxiously sought his wounded friends. Then appeared all the fury and horrors of the Fronde, the Hôtel-de-Ville was broken into, and the people, mad with rage, shouted death to Mazarin, while poverty, famine and pestilence became manifest on every side.

It was now that Paris felt the evils which had devastated the provinces, and which it had for so long a time refused to credit. It learned what it was to be dying of hunger, to be devoured by pestilence, and now too it learned the worth of the Priests of the Mission and of the Sisters of Charity. The capital was now to experience, like the provinces, the value, in time of pestilence, of the foundling hospital, soup dinners, charitable institutions; but above all it was to recognise and fully acknowledge the greatness of Saint Vincent de Paul. In a letter dated June 21, 1652, the saint enumerates all that was being done for the poor of Paris. "Soup is distributed every day to fifteen or sixteen thousand poor of every description. Eight or nine hundred young girls have been rescued from vice and misery, and the poor priests who had to abandon their parishes find a refuge here. They come to us to be supported, and also to receive instruction in their duties. See how many good works there are

in which God permits us to participate. Our good Sisters of Charity are labouring nobly for the corporal assistance of the poor people. They make and distribute soup under the direction of Mlle. le Gras to thirteen hundred poor. In the parish of Saint-Denis they give it to eight hundred, and in that of Saint-Paul to five hundred, not to speak of their care of the sick and their other good works. I beg of you to pray for them and us."[1]

Meanwhile Saint Vincent was passing days and nights before the altar, praying God to send succour where all human aid had failed. He redoubled his penances, and urged his priests and the Sisters of Charity to do likewise. His one thought was to restore peace, to reconcile the contending parties and to effect the return to Paris of the Queen-Regent and her son. To obtain this end he directed all his prayers and penances, for he believed if this could be attained all other wounds would quickly heal. With this in view he wrote, August 16, 1652, to the Pope, feeling convinced that he alone could successfully intervene:—

"Most humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, I, the most miserable of all men, offer to you anew and consecrate myself and the Congregation of Priests of the Mission, of which I, though most unworthy, have been made Superior-General by the Holy and Apostolic See. Confiding in your paternal goodness, I presume to represent to you the lamentable and pitiable state of our dear France.

"The royal house is divided, and the people split up into factions. The cities and provinces are burned and devastated by civil war. The harvest has not been reaped, nor sown for next year. Everybody and everything are

[1] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 438.

at the mercy of the soldiery, who inflict terrible tortures, from which even if the people escape, it is only to die of famine. Not even the priests are secure, but suffer most awful persecution. Maidens, nay, virgins consecrated to God, are being dishonoured, and their convents and chapels plundered. The priests have to fly from their churches, and thus there are no sacraments administered to the dying, nor mass offered for those who could come. But worst of all, the Most Holy Sacrament is trampled under foot and the sacred vessels stolen. The misery cannot be realised except by those who witness it. It may appear presumptuous that a poor and unknown priest should write to your Holiness, who is so well informed in all that concerns nations, especially Christian nations. But I beg of you to bear with me. '*I shall speak to my Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.*' The only remaining remedy for our evils is that your Holiness should exercise His paternal influence and authority. I am not ignorant that you are already grieved at our misery, and have already endeavoured to succour us in the person of your Nuncio, who has laboured so indefatigably, though without success. But there are many hours in the day, and if success does not come in the first, it may in the second. The arm of the Lord is not shortened, and I firmly believe that He has reserved for His Vicar on earth the glory of bringing rest after labour, joy after misery, and peace after war. I am convinced that He will through your Holiness re-establish union in the royal family, comfort the people harassed by a protracted war, restore health to the dying, bless the crops, bring nuns and priests back to their sanctuaries; in fine, give new life to us all. May it be so! Multiplying our supplications, and begging your blessing, I pray and hope for these happy

results by the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose representative your Holiness is."[1]

Meanwhile the desire for peace became general. The misery was at its height, and the people only wanted an excuse to lay down their arms. Ably advised by Mazarin, the Queen proclaimed on August 26 a full pardon to all without distinction who had taken part in the events of the last few years. This was the death-warrant of the Fronde, and all hastened to avail themselves of the amnesty. Deputations went to Compiègne, where the court was, and "the young King Louis XIV. received them with that dignity which was natural to him, and which lent a charm as well as a weight to what he said."[2] The deputations came back thoroughly satisfied, fully resolved to discontinue the war and welcome the return of the King.

There was, however, a difficulty still remaining which required solution, namely, should Mazarin take part in the triumphal entry of the royal party into Paris. It would seem that he had a right, for to him more than to anybody else was that triumph due. The Queen and her son knew and felt this, and desired that the Cardinal should enjoy his reward. But on the other hand, was it not to be feared that his presence should rekindle the yet dying flame, or at least weaken the reception of the King? Of this Saint Vincent de Paul had no doubt, for he believed it would be a fatal mistake. Probably he spoke to the Queen on the point, but evidently did not succeed, so he determined to appeal direct to Mazarin himself. His letter to the Cardinal was written with much care, and clearly reflects the saint's state of mind. It is dated September 11, 1652, and we give it almost in its entirety.

[1] "Letters," vol. i. p. 464.

[2] Cousin, *Madame de Longueville*, vol. ii. p. 171.

"I presume to address your Eminence, and trust you may be pleased to know that it seems to me Paris has returned to its former state, and is ready to welcome the King. This is the universal opinion; and even the Ladies of Charity, who belong to the very highest society, say that they are prepared to go out to meet their Majesties should they learn of their coming.

"This being the case, I think your Eminence ought to urge the Queen-Regent and her son to return, and reciprocate the feelings of their people. There are, no doubt, objections to this course, but I humbly request your Eminence to consider my answer to them.

"The first objection is that, although there are many well disposed in Paris, yet there are others, some of whom are indifferent and some opposed to the King's return. To this I reply, there are very few indeed who oppose it, and those who are indifferent will be led by the majority, except perhaps those who should fear penalties, were they not reassured by the proclamation.

"In the second place, it is to be feared that the presence of the leaders of the opposition may provoke a repetition of the scenes of the Hôtel-de-Ville. My answer to this is that the one party will seize this opportunity of peace with the King, and the other, seeing Paris become loyal, will in turn submit. Of this I have not the slightest doubt.

"The third objection is that somebody may say to your Eminence, Paris ought to be chastised, and thus made to learn wisdom. Permit me to remind you of the example of Charles VI. under a similar revolt. As a punishment he disarmed a large number of the rebels, and took up the chain of office; but this only fanned the flame, and for sixteen years they intrigued against him.

Moreover, neither Henry III. nor Henry IV. benefited thereby.

"And if it is thought well that before the return of their Majesties some arrangements ought to be arrived at with Spain and the princes, believe me, the people of Paris will ultimately recognise the advantage and expediency of the amnesty, and declare for the princes on the first occasion.

"Some may say that it is your Eminence's interest that the King should not be reconciled with the princes and should not return to Paris without you, in order that it may be seen that it is not your Eminence who is the obstacle to peace, but the disloyal princes. To this I reply, what does it matter whether you return before or after the King, provided you do return, and of that I feel sure. Moreover, such conduct on the part of your Eminence will regain the hearts of the people, and in a short time, as I have said, you will be recalled.

"Behold what I presume to suggest to your Eminence, confident that it will be well received, especially as I have had no communication whatever with those who are in opposition. Begging your Eminence to believe me, your most humble, obedient and faithful servant,

"VINCENT DE PAUL."[1]

In accordance with the wishes thus expressed by Saint Vincent, the young King and Queen-Regent made their solemn entry into Paris, amid great jubilation, on October 21. Mazarin had retired to Bouillon, and awaited there the signal for his return. Peace and goodwill were rapidly restored, and Parliament and people, disabused of the Fronde, began to see that they had

[1] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 475.

for four years impeded the prosperity of France. On February 3, 1653, Mazarin returned amid enthusiastic rejoicing. The Fronde was now over, and nothing remained except to heal the wounds it had opened; but this was not the business of the great Cardinal, it was the mission of Saint Vincent de Paul.

CHAPTER IV

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL LABOURS TO REPAIR THE DISASTERS OF THE FRONDE—THE GRANDEUR OF THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT OF THIS PERIOD

1652–1660

WHEN a vessel has withstood a violent storm and calm is restored, she is steered into port, where her damages are repaired and her whole frame newly strengthened. Such was the condition of Catholic France in 1652, and his charity and the circumstances of the time imposed on Saint Vincent de Paul the task of renewing her. Already sixty-six, enfeebled in health, with his limbs hardly able to support him, he found himself alone when he turned to face the work. All the great men who had laboured for the spiritual regeneration of France had passed away. Saint Francis de Sales died in 1622, Cardinal de Bérulle in 1629, Père de Condren in 1641, Père Bourdoise in 1655, and M. Olier was soon to die in his arms. He alone, then, remained to carry the torch of this second regeneration, and he had only seven or eight years before him to do it. But those seven or eight years are the most fruitful of that extraordinary life, for, though old in years, he was young in spirit, wise by experience, and being devoured by a love of God and man, he diffused an odour of sanctity around him.

The spectacle that met Saint Vincent's view when he returned to Paris was singularly sad, and well calculated

to discourage a less humble mind than his. Many of his works were in ruins, and the misery he had laboured to minimise had increased. Never were there so many outcast children on the streets, and no money to maintain them. Never were there so many young girls without education, religious instruction, or means of livelihood, and no shelter to receive and protect them. The licentiousness of the war and the Fronde had increased the number of these wretched beings; it had made them sinners, and now there was no retreat in which to do penance. The streets were crowded with beggars, some truly poor, nay, dying of hunger; others only feigning wretchedness, but extorting money by threats. In Paris alone there were forty-five thousand of these beggars, and the environs were practically uninhabitable. To combat these different forms of misery, Saint Vincent had raised up his armies of charity. The evils, however, of the time had tended to increase the misery and decrease the ranks of his associations. The Gentlemen's Association of Charity suffered most, both from the war and the Fronde. In the midst of political strife the heart becomes dull, perhaps deadened, to charitable appeals. The premature death in 1649 of Baron de Renty had inflicted a severe blow on the men's association, from which it should hardly have recovered but for the timely intervention of our saint. Even as it was, the poor suffered considerably from its languishing state. The Ladies' Association of Charity had made a better resistance to the trials of the time. Even it, however, had been reduced from over two hundred members down to one hundred and fifty, and at one time down to ninety. Mme. Goussault's loss was the first blow, and Mme. de Lamoignon's the second. Fortunately, Mme. de Miramion and the Duchess d'Aiguillon were

still to the fore, and with their aid and encouragement things would not long remain very low.

The other armies of charity, the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity, held together by their religious constitution, had better withstood the storm. No doubt, the Priests of the Mission, spread all over the afflicted provinces, had lost many eminent men; but, on the other hand, they had gained many young recruits, who, if they lacked the experience of their elders, were possessed of the zeal of martyrs. With the aid of these, Saint Vincent had founded eleven new houses, and what was still better, seven new seminaries. Later on, when the Congregation had increased still more, its members left their own country, and renewed by their zeal in Africa, Scotland, Ireland, and Poland, the wondrous results of the first ages of Christianity.

Of all the works of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of Charity had suffered least, for the virgin consecrated to God seemed to grow strong under trials. Their number had increased, and their love of the poor had become a kind of passion. On one occasion, for example, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, overwhelmed with her works of charity, asked Saint Vincent to send her two sisters to aid her. Seeing all the good that she was doing, the saint readily consented, and told Sisters Barbe-Engiboust and Marie-Denise to go to the Petit-Luxembourg. But the same evening the sisters came back in tears, saying they had not left father and mother to serve the rich and live in grand houses, and humbly asked to resume their labours among the poor. Saint Vincent used to recall this with tears of joy. "Are you not delighted," he writes to Mlle. le Gras, "to see the strength of virtue in these two sisters, and their contempt for worldly grandeur."

Another time the Queen of Poland requested Saint Vincent to send three sisters, who arrived at Warsaw in the midst of the plague. The Queen sent two to Cracow to work among the poor, but retained the third to help herself. When the sister heard of this arrangement she said, "Madame, I have given myself to God in the service of the poor. Your Majesty can easily find another person to help you." After this she too joined her companions at Cracow.

We must give here that beautiful conversation which a dying sister had with Saint Vincent. When Sister Andrée was about to die, the saint said to her, "Have you any remorse of conscience, my dear sister?"—"No, Father, except that I took too great a pleasure in serving the poor."—"What! my daughter, nothing but that?"—"That's all, Father. I took too sensible a satisfaction in that, for it seemed to me that I was flying when I went to visit the poor, so great was my joy."—"Ah! then," said the saint, with tears in his eyes, "die in peace." Another sister had a marvellous escape as she was going up a staircase, the house having fallen and killed thirty-five persons. "I put my basket on a pole they held from the street, and leaping to the sheets held out below, found myself safely freed from the ruins. I then, though greatly frightened, continued visiting the sick."

Others also of this noble society fell martyrs to the plague, like that generous-hearted sister at Étampes, who, from her dying pallet, rose to soothe the last moments of a poor woman, and only left the sufferer's bed to return to die in her own. Far from weakening an order, such heroism only serves to strengthen it by infusing into it that holy enthusiasm which is its vivifying principle and most fascinating attraction. It was at this period that the greatest vocations came: Marguerite

Chetif and Mathurine Guérin, the second and third Superioresses of the Sisters of Charity. Then there was Martha d'Auteuil, called the miracle-worker, and a number of others well worthy of note. Thus we see the material Saint Vincent had at his disposal after the misfortunes of the last few years. With the same patience as of old, and with the same prudence, now further strengthened by experience, he began to place his works on a firmer and broader basis, so that henceforth we shall see them withstand every storm and survive every peril.

What was in the most critical state was the work of the foundlings, established only since the war began. It had no house of its own, and its revenue was insufficient, for it expended 40,000 livres a year, whereas its income did not exceed 17,000 francs. On the termination of hostilities the work seemed unable to hold out any longer, for many of the ladies had left Paris, and others were completely impoverished by taxes levied to defray the expenses of the war. All were of opinion that the work should be abandoned, for under the present circumstances it could no longer be maintained. Saint Vincent was decidedly opposed to this, saying that there was no work of more importance for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and therefore it should be continued. Up to the time that these ladies undertook the work the poor foundlings were left to perish, but now they were baptized and enabled to live. His appeals not meeting with the success he looked for, Saint Vincent resolved to hold a general meeting of the Ladies of Charity, and supported by the Duchess d'Aiguillon, Mme. de Miramion, and Mme. de Traversay, to make one great and final effort to rekindle their courage and reanimate the work. At a fixed hour the assembly met,

and Saint Vincent de Paul was there, ready with a carefully prepared and passionate appeal on behalf of the foundlings. Recent researches in Florence have brought to light the following hitherto unpublished document, which contains the saint's famous peroration, and besides, is most interesting from many points of view :—

"I spoke to you on the last occasion very briefly of the works of the foundlings, because there were many other matters for discussion, and it was thought that the officers could meet the pressing wants for the time being. Experience, however, has shown that such is not the case, and now I must speak to you of their great poverty and the necessity for helping them.

"1. Because, being in extreme necessity, you are bound to help them. *Non pavisti, occidisti.* These infants may be killed in two ways, either by violence or by destitution.

"2. Because our Lord has chosen you to be their mothers.

"3. Because, after much prayer and consultation, you determined not to abandon them, and that for the following reasons :—

"(1) Because they were wretchedly cared for, there being only one nurse for four or five children.

"(2) Because they were sold for three sous to scoundrels, who broke their arms and limbs to excite all the more compassion.

"(3) Because women who had no children had picked up these and made them their own.

"(4) Because sometimes they were poisoned.

"(5) Because they hardly ever lived.

"(6) And worst of all, because they died without baptism.

"These were the motives which urged you to become the adoptive mothers of these poor castaways. If you too abandon them, they must die. What is to prevent it? The police have not prevented it up till now; and if you don't, who will? Most certainly nobody, and therefore, ladies, you are bound to rescue them. If you abandon them, what will God say, who committed them to your care?

"What will the King and the magistrates say, who gave them to your charge?

"What will the public say, who praised and blessed your noble work?

"But what will the poor little infants say? 'Alas! our mothers abandoned us, but they were wicked. But you abandon us also, you who are good;' which is as much as to say, 'God abandons us,' or that there is no God.

"Lastly, what will you say at the hour of your death, when God will demand of you why you abandoned these little orphans?

"For all these reasons, ladies, you are bound to continue the work. . . .

"*First Objection.*

"1. The hard times which impoverish everybody compel each one to live very economically. To this my reply is, you shall never want on account of the foundlings. *Que miseretur pauperis, nunquam indigebit.*

"2. There are a hundred among you, and if each contributes something towards a hundred livres it will be more than is necessary, and if all contribute something, together with what we have, things will be right.

"3. Some will say, I have no money. Oh, how different is your piety to that of the children of Israel, who gave their jewels for sake of the golden calf!

"4. Lastly, it will be said, this strain will continue, and thus our children will be exposed. But such is not the case.

"*Second Objection.*

"This poverty will overtake the association in future as well as at present.

"There are two important investments that will prevent that.

"*Means.*

"1. Prayer.

"2. Holy Communion.

"3. The support of relatives and friends.

"4. Charity sermons.

"5. Lastly, to make up their minds whether they should abandon the work or make an effort this year also."[1]

Let us see how the noble heart of Saint Vincent, inflamed by charity, urged in eloquent terms the motives he thus put forward. We may judge his whole speech by his magnificent peroration. "Ladies, pity and charity have forced you to adopt these little creatures as your children. You have been their mothers according to grace, when their mothers according to nature abandoned them. Will you also abandon them? Cease for the moment to be their mothers, that you may become their judges; their life and death is in your hands. I am about to take your verdict, for it is time now to pronounce sentence, whether you will any longer have pity on them. They shall live if you continue to take care of them; they shall most infallibly die if you abandon them." The assembly replied, amid tears, that the work would be continued at any cost.

[1] "Conferences," vol. ii. p. 657.

But of what value were these resolutions taken amid enthusiasm? Six months afterwards the financial embarrassment was equally bad. Saint Vincent now determined that some permanent remedy should be applied, and two things above all others secured, namely, a house and an annuity. Already they enjoyed 4000 livres a year from Louis XIII., and Anne of Austria had increased this grant to 12,000. Parliament voted an annual sum of 15,000 livres, and it was left to public and private charity to make up the balance of the 40,000 which was necessary for the maintenance of the work. Louis XIV., however, completed the grant from his own purse. Now that the annuity was secured, the next thing was to find a suitable house. At first the Queen presented the Château de Bicêtre, but the infants not getting good health there, necessitated a change. At last a house was procured in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and here was built that greatest of all the saint's institutions, the Foundling Hospital. Twelve Sisters of Charity were sent to carry on the work, and here the foundlings were received without it ever being known by whom they were abandoned. "Noble invention of charity," says M. de Lamartine—"hands open to receive the victim, eyes and lips closed to hide the culprit."

Thus was completed, years after the death of our saint, no doubt, that great Foundling Hospital, which, beginning in Paris, was soon copied in Lyons, Marseilles, Toulon, Dijon, nay, throughout France, and which, from the boldness of its conception, the appropriateness of its design and the magnitude of the benefits it conferred, deserves to be ranked as the grandest institution founded by Saint Vincent de Paul. While labouring at this work, he was also engaged in reviving another of not less importance, namely, free schools for

children. He was not the originator of these, for the Church, ever solicitous that the young should be educated, had always enjoined it on her bishops, urged it in her councils, and wherever she built a cathedral or a monastery, there too she built a school. Thus was it for fifteen centuries; but unfortunately the seats of learning which studded the country in the Middle Ages were cruelly swept away by the wars of the Ligne and the Fronde. A remedy should then be found for such a state of things, and fortunately the Sisters of Charity were ready to meet the want, for from the very beginning Saint Vincent had taught them to consider the education of the poor as one of their principal duties. Margaret Nazeau, the first Sister of Charity, was passionately devoted to this work, and very soon the sisters, supported by contributions from pious ladies, began to establish free schools for the poor all over France.

But if the children of the poor had to be rescued from ignorance and vice, even still more urgently was assistance necessary for those who had lost their virtue and honour. In the midst of such disorders as had prevailed for the last few years, the number of these unfortunate beings had become considerable, and now more than ever Saint Vincent resolved to save them. Not content with the numerous asylums already founded in Paris by Mmes. de Meignelais, Miramion, Combé, and Mlle. Pollalion, he conceived the idea of establishing a large hospital or penitentiary. As usual, he began by seeking advice, procuring a house and an annuity; but he did not live to complete this great work, which, however, was carried out by the Sisters of Charity.

While our saint was thus engaged in founding schools and penitentiaries, a wealthy citizen of Paris offered him 100,000 francs, to be applied to any charity he might

select. The saint was free to expend it on his own Congregation, but, with characteristic disinterestedness, he devoted the money to a totally different object. It is often the misfortune of aged labourers and tradesmen that after a life of toil they have not enough to support themselves in old age. Here was an opportunity for most usefully spending this munificent gift. Saint Vincent consulted the donor, and suggested that the money should be expended in building a home for the aged, where husband and wife might live together still, and end their days in peace and comfort. So pleased was the good citizen with this idea, that he added 30,000 francs to what he had already given, and thus was begun the Hospital of the Holy Name of Jesus, under the management of the Sisters of Charity; and to this day it stands as a happy home for the aged poor, and as a monument to the charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Besides these foundations directly made by Saint Vincent de Paul, how many others grew up around him, of which he was the inspirer and counsellor! No one could approach him without being warmed by the fire of charity which consumed him. The Duchess d'Aiguillon stands pre-eminent among the noble ladies who laboured so much in the cause of Christian charity at this period. She almost exhausted her resources to meet the evils of the civil war; but besides that, the Collège des Bons-Enfants in Paris, hospitals in Quebec, Marseilles, Algiers, Richelieu, and a house for the Priests of the Mission in Rome, are some of the fruits of her extraordinary charity. Next we must mention Mme. de Miramion, famed for her beauty, but far more renowned for her work among fallen women. She built at her own expense two penitentiaries, and placed them under the

direction of Saint Vincent de Paul. Mlle. Pollalion founded the Seminary of Providence, a house designed to receive young girls who wished to amend their lives; and in connection with this institution was the Christian Union, an organisation to receive converts, and which merited the public applause of Fénelon. It was with the advice of Saint Vincent that Mlle. de Blosset founded the Sisters of Sainte-Geneviève, and Mlle. Marie Saucier established so many free schools. Under his direction, too, arose the Sisters of the Cross; as it was likewise under his protection they triumphed over calumny and persecution. In fact, all had recourse to him, and always found encouragement and support.

It was not merely by his person and advice that he assisted and encouraged good works. Far and wide, where he had never been seen, his very name evoked enthusiasm and wrought a powerful influence for good. Hardly had the world seen and felt the benefit of the Sister of Charity, the beauty of the conception and its appropriateness to meet the wants of the time, than a hundred copies arose almost rivalling their model in works of mercy. Thus were founded the Sisters of Saint Joseph at Puy, of Saint Charles at Nancy, and Saint Agnes at Arras, and all destined to serve the poor, to clothe the orphan, to tend the sick, to teach the young, to visit the prison, to rescue the fallen, nay, even on the battlefield to heal the wounded and soothe the dying.[1] To these must be added the Sisters of Saint Maurice, the Sisters of the Faith, the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of Mercy.[2] Thus what in the beginning of the century was judged an impossibility by the most pious bishops, and what Saint Francis de Sales had hesitated to undertake, was successfully accomplished by Saint Vincent de Paul.

[1] Picot, p. 421. [2] *Id.*, p. 423.

With these Congregations without perpetual vows and enclosure must be joined all those other bodies exclusively devoted to hospital work, and which are no less the product of the zeal and charity of our saint. At Fliche, Mlle. de Melun, after abandoning the world, that was charmed with her beauty and grace, spent her life and fortune in establishing hospitals at Beaufort, Beaugé, Laval, Nîmes, Avignon, and even as far away as Montreal. About this period also were founded the great hospitals of Angers and Nantes. In the diocese of Rouen alone twenty-four charitable institutes were established, and in that of Clermont almost as many, while the diocese of Orleans exceeded either. Hospitals sprang up with extraordinary rapidity at Caen, Dijon, Nancy, Marseilles, Grenoble, Amiens and many other large centres. The enthusiasm was widespread, and charity manifested itself everywhere in works of mercy.

It was not that the old orders had lost anything by the introduction of the new, but the enthusiasm which fifty years before had greeted the advent of the Carmelites and Franciscans was now renewed in the case of the Sisters of Charity.

As active and lasting charity enlivens faith and piety, the churches of Paris soon became insufficient to accommodate the ever-increasing number of the faithful. Each year saw several edifices raised to the glory of God. In 1646 Saint-Sulpice, in 1653 Saint-Roch, in 1655 the Oratory, in 1656 Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and in 1659 the Madeleine. But what shall we say of the provinces? The work is too vast to dwell upon here; it is sufficient to say that notwithstanding the many imprudent nominations to bishoprics which had been made in the time of the Fronde, a number of saintly bishops, either friends or pupils of Saint Vincent de Paul, were labouring

strenuously and successfully to regenerate their dioceses. The fruit of their labours is seen in the number of churches that were built. At Dax was Mgr. Desclaux, to whom Saint Vincent wrote to congratulate him on his labours for the erection of seminaries;[1] at Luçon, Mgr. Nivelle, a second Saint Francis de Sales;[2] at Grasse, Mgr. Godeau, a distinguished member of the Tuesday Conference and promoter of the *Gallia Christiana;* at Marseilles, Mgr. Gault, a man of such heroic virtue that the French clergy have petitioned Rome to proceed to his canonisation. Other names not less deserving of mention occur about this time; suffice it to say, however, that Saint Vincent's letters are full of admiration for the French bishops between 1650–1660.

Besides these bishops there were also many priests eminent for their virtue and zeal, men who were reared in the ecclesiastical seminaries and matured in the Tuesday Conferences. In Paris were the Abbés de Chaudenier, nephews of Cardinal Rochefoucauld, both men of the highest virtue, who refused every dignity, and laboured incessantly for the poor. At Angers was the Abbé de Vaux, who brought there the Nuns of the Visitation and the Sisters of Charity, and who died in the odour of sanctity. At Saumur was the Abbé Bouvard, son of one of the King's physicians, a rich man, but who, despising this world, spent his wealth and life in the service of the poor. The Venerable Bénigne Joly was then at Dijon, and many other illustrious ecclesiastics were to be met throughout France, founding seminaries or erecting institutes of charity.

It was these seminaries that were to bring forth those great men whose genius is the lasting glory of the seventeenth century: Bossuet, Massillon, Fénelon,

[1] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 58. [2] *Id.*, p. 183.

Bourdaloue and Fléchier. The latter were still young, and Bossuet only Archdeacon of Metz, but he was soon to startle the social world of Paris by his eloquent pleading of Saint Vincent's latest work—the General Hospital. Of this institution we can now form no idea. It was the greatest work ever attempted by Christian charity. It was estimated that 45,000 beggars were on the streets of Paris by day, and haunted its lanes and alleys by night. The object of the General Hospital was to receive all those who through sickness or age could not work, and by this means afford a shelter for honest poverty, and at the same time expose hypocrisy. The immediate consequence would be to make those work who were able, for begging in the streets was to be strictly forbidden.

The Duchess d'Aiguillon was the first to conceive the plan of this great work. She consulted with Mme. de Lamoignon and her other friends, including President de Bellièvre, but many thought the undertaking was entirely beyond their reach. After a while the Duchess spoke to Mlle. le Gras, who recommended her to interview Saint Vincent. But even our saint at first sight deemed the project too great. Being urged to consider the matter, he consented to spend eight days in prayer, during which he hoped to find out the will of God. At the end of that period he sent for the Duchess d'Aiguillon, and announced to her that the work should be undertaken. Immediately subscriptions were begun, and large sums were contributed by the Queen-Regent, Mazarin, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, President de Bellièvre and many others. Everybody, in fact, was desirous of having a share in so noble a work, so that the princes, magistrates and great ladies of the capital sent large sums of money. The building went up as if by magic,

and soon the beggars of Paris had to choose between work or the hospital, for henceforth no begging was to be tolerated in the streets. The consequence was that out of the 45,000 paupers who hitherto infested the capital, 5000 found a shelter in the General Hospital, while the other 40,000, now deprived of their trade of professional begging, were forced to work. Here we have an example of the wisdom and strength of Christian charity, of the marvels of its power, and the genius of our holy religion. It was on behalf of the General Hospital that Bossuet delivered his magnificent oration of Saint Paul: *Cum infirmor tunc potens sum.* Saint Vincent was listening to him, and it is a charming thought to picture together the disciple and the master, the former with his mind resplendent with genius, the latter with his heart all on fire with charity.

BOOK V

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL PERFECTS HIS TWO GREAT WORKS, THE PRIESTS OF THE MISSION AND THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

1652–1660

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CHAPTER I

SPREAD OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION—LABOURS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE MISSIONERS IN BARBARY

1652

WHILE the events narrated in the last chapter were taking place in France, and the Priests of the Mission with the Sisters of Charity were going through the towns and villages of Lorraine, Champagne, Burgundy and Orleans, bringing aid and consolation amid the horrors of war, famine and pestilence, others of the Priests of the Mission were leaving France, and at the bidding of Saint Vincent de Paul going to the assistance of those in foreign lands. To Barbary, Algiers and Tunis they went to evangelise the slaves; to Rome and Genoa, to reform the clergy and assist the poor; and to Scotland and Ireland, to sustain the faith of Catholics suffering the cruel persecution of Cromwell. The pious Queen Mary de Gonzagua brought the children of Saint Vincent to Poland, and far away in the heart of the Indian Ocean they were dying on the ungrateful soil of Madagascar. The great heart of Saint Vincent knew no bounds, and where souls were to be saved, suffering to be relieved

and tears to be dried, he never rested till he had sent his children there. The history of these missions recalls the most glorious epoch of the Church, and even the history of the catacombs.

Of all the countries that appealed to the heart of Saint Vincent the desolate region of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli was the foremost, for there the people groaned under the cruel yoke of the Turk. He had been a slave there for two years, and had tasted drop by drop the bitter chalice of ignominy and suffering which falls to the lot of the unhappy captive. One cannot think without a shudder of the horrors perpetrated on Christians, especially women and children. At Algiers more than 20,000 slaves were in chains, at Tunis 6000; at Biserte there were five galley-ships, at Fez two, and at Tripoli four, making a total for the three towns of 40,000 slaves. Every day brought three, four, or five thousand Christians to Algiers and Tunis, fresh for the slave market, having been captured on the high seas. Among these were nobles, chevaliers, priests, and members of the best families. Stripped of their clothes, they were bought and sold in public market, and their purchasers acquired a right of life or death. Usually they were brought away up the country and subjected to the most degrading treatment. At Tunis and Biserte they were chained and guarded night and day, but at Algiers only at night. Picture a long series of horse-boxes containing three or four hundred horses, and you have a slave market, with this exception, however, that horses are usually well fed and cared for, but the Christians were left in a state of misery and total abandonment. The Turks hated their religion, and, moreover, often the passion of the slave-drivers was vented on their helpless victims till they died or were left cripples for life.

"These wretched beings thus confined were only brought out to till the ground, to row the galleys or other ships, and frequently to wage war against their fellow-Christians. When they rowed or worked they were very scantily clad, exposed to the burning heat of summer and the piercing cold of winter. On their return, worn out with fatigue and as if half dead, they were huddled together like beasts in their stables, rather to languish than find repose. It is incredible to see the labour and the heat they endured, which would have been sufficient to kill a horse. Their skin wasted off their bones, and their tongues hung out like those of dogs, because of the awful heat. One winter's day an aged slave, worn out with misery and no longer able to bear it, implored for his release, but the cruel answer came that he must work. Such sufferings drive but to despair, and many, seeing no other ray of hope, preferred death itself than so miserable an existence. Hence some cut their throats, others hanged themselves, while not a few, exasperated by the cruelty of their masters, attempted to murder them, and as a punishment were burned alive. Worst of all, some renounced the faith of Jesus Christ and lived in a state deserving eternal damnation, in order to escape their cruel sufferings."[1]

Now France tolerated all this without saying a word. Thousands of Frenchmen were being treated as beasts without Louis XIII., Richelieu, Mazarin, or Louis XIV. making the slightest move. Saint Vincent bitterly deplored the situation, and anxiously sought how a remedy could be applied to so frightful a calamity.

There were a number of French consuls at Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli; but separated from France by a sea that they could not safely traverse, their power was

[1] Abelly, vol. i. pp. 381–382.

reduced almost to nought. Seeing themselves as little watched as sustained in their authority, they utilised their position to quickly enrich themselves and return home as soon as possible. No doubt by a treaty between the King of France and the Sultan, consuls could retain a priest as chaplain; but this they never did, for fear of displeasing the Turks, and thus there were scarcely any priests in Africa. Thousands of slaves were almost entirely abandoned and deprived of the sacraments and all spiritual aid. Saint Vincent de Paul determined to put an end to so deplorable a state of affairs. He communicated with the consuls at Algiers and Tunis, reminded them of the treaty, refuted their objections, calmed their fears, and obliged them to receive as chaplains two or three of the most eminent members of his Congregation. Later on he increased the number, placing one or two on each galley. As time elapsed he saw that these priests had neither sufficient liberty nor authority, so he resolved upon a bold step. He got his friend the pious Duchess d'Aiguillon to purchase the consulates of Algiers and Tunis. Such was the custom at the time. Here he at once placed pious laics, and subsequently Priests of the Mission, whom he raised to the dignity of consuls, and, in order to come to the assistance of the slaves, invested them with all the powers and privileges attached to the office.

This was such a bold idea that it stirred Rome, and the Propaganda addressed a letter of remonstrance to Saint Vincent. It recalled the sacred canons which forbid priests, especially missioners in pagan countries, to meddle in commerce or temporal affairs. Saint Vincent replied that there was no question of business or politics, but only the service of God and the slaves, which could be better secured by priests as consuls,

since it was so difficult to find suitable laymen. It was a work of charity, not of self-interest; of self-sacrifice, not of gain; for such offices were a heavy burden on the Congregation, and the expenditure far exceeded the income. "Algiers costs thirty thousand livres, and Tunis requires as much more. Hence," adds Saint Vincent, "we should long ago have given them up, were it not to abandon to wolves twenty or thirty thousand souls, whom we are endeavouring to preserve to the Church and to God by means of these temporal positions. Indeed, I know not but that in the end we shall be forced to resign, especially if our priests are not allowed to exercise their functions. That would be a great misfortune, because of the great good which it pleases God to accomplish through them, and which should then entirely cease." [1]

The Propaganda urging the point, Saint Vincent again wrote: "If the Propaganda is unwilling to authorise the priests as consuls, let it at least tolerate them. If it is otherwise, we shall have to abandon the slaves, since it is impossible to assist them without the authority of consuls. Suitable laymen cannot be found to do the work of God, after the treatment which the last received. However, we shall not withdraw till the last moment, for it would be a great misfortune."

Evidently the Propaganda was convinced by these reasons, for the saint not only continued but increased his work among the consuls.

Saint Vincent, who knew well the dangers to which those should be exposed who went to Algeria, whether as missioners or as consuls, chose them with the greatest care. As a matter of fact almost all died as martyrs, either from the pestilence or from the cruelty of the

[1] Letter of Saint Vincent to Father Jolly, Superior of the Mission at Rome.

Turks. We shall name a few of the principal. The first whom our saint destined for Tunis was Father Guérin, and he gave him as a companion an exemplary lay-brother, François Francillon. Father Guérin had been a soldier before becoming a priest. He displayed rare courage and coolness amid the horrors of Lorraine and Champagne, and deeming such trials as nothing, he dreamed of dying amid the Turks and their captives. On learning his mission he was delighted. "Somebody remarked to him that he seemed very happy, and that at last he was going to be hanged in Barbary. 'I hope for even more,' he replied, with his eyes beaming with zeal."

The second, who set out shortly afterwards to aid Father Guérin, was Father le Vacher. At one time he was about to be married, but an unforeseen obstacle broke off the engagement, and he came to Saint Vincent to receive consolation. At the very first sight of the young man the saint had a light as if an inspiration. Under a frail body he recognised an iron will. "Leave the world," said the saint, "and come to Saint-Lazare." Young le Vacher obeyed, was ordained priest, and was now being sent as a missioner to Africa. As Saint Vincent was standing on the threshold of Saint-Lazare, embracing him before leaving for Marseilles, the Nuncio chanced to arrive. The saint, turning towards him, said, "My lord, be so good as to bless this young missioner, who is setting out for Barbary."—"What! that child," exclaimed the Nuncio in astonishment. "Yes, my lord, such is his vocation."

On his arrival at Marseilles, Father le Vacher fell ill, and the Superior of the house where he was stopping wrote to the saint representing the impossibility of sending him on such a voyage and to labours evidently beyond his strength. "I beg you, Father Chrétien" (this was

the Superior's name), immediately replied Saint Vincent, "to see that Father le Vacher embarks as soon as possible. If the weakness occasioned by his illness is so great as to prevent him walking to the ship, let him be carried; but no matter what state he is in, he is to embark. If after twenty or thirty leagues he can no longer stand the sea air, he may go down and lie in the cabin."

Never before had Saint Vincent spoken thus. To induce a person to join the Congregation would have been repugnant to his humility; to force him into danger, contrary to his prudence. But the sequel makes it evident that he had the foresight of a genius or an inspiration from God. Father le Vacher became the hero of Africa. His zeal and charity among the slaves; his firmness before the Bey; the undeserved insults and outrages which he suffered; his tedious journeying from galley to galley; his fruitful consulate; his wonderful age, for he survived Saint Vincent; and finally, his glorious death at the mouth of a cannon, made him for fifty years the soul and model, as yet unrivalled, of the African missioners.

Side by side with Father le Vacher we must put Mr. Husson, a parliamentary lawyer in Paris. Saint Vincent sent this gentleman to replace Father le Vacher as consul, for the latter, since he had been nominated Vicar-Apostolic of Tunis, felt the burden too heavy. "He is the most accomplished young man," wrote Saint Vincent, "that I know. You will be able soon to see his virtue, so I shall say nothing, except that you should show him the greatest respect. He is not only prudent, agreeable, industrious and pious, but also clever in business matters and always ready to help his neighbour. His intention in going to Barbary is simply to serve God and the poor slaves, and he is leaving his home and

family, who are exceedingly attached to him, and endeavouring with tears and remonstrances to prevent his going."

While Saint Vincent was thus providing for the wants of the mission of Tunis, he was also sending two missioners to Algiers—Father Novelli, a young priest of heroic courage, and Brother Barreau, who was to become consul. Father Novelli only lived to reach Africa, for, arriving in the midst of a plague, he laboured night and day among the dying till he was carried off himself when scarcely thirty. Saint Vincent had the highest idea of him, and wept while paying him his tribute of praise. Between seven and eight hundred slaves followed his hearse. The two missioners, Father le Sage and Dieppe, whom our saint next sent to replace him, were likewise taken away by the plague in a very short time, and Brother Barreau again found himself alone.

Brother Barreau's courage was like that of Father le Vacher, but he allowed his heart to carry him away. His greatest desire was to deliver the slaves by paying their debts. He gave everything he had, even more than he had, and went beyond his means to ransom them. He took upon himself a captive's debts, and as he could not pay them he was put into prison after prison. It was imprudence, no doubt, but an imprudence of the saints, which the world condemns, but heaven forgives. Saint Vincent reproved it, but not too severely, for he admired the brother's peace, courage and unalterable charity. On the failure of a Marseilles merchant with whom Brother Barreau had no business whatever, the Pacha required payment from him. As he could not procure the money, he received hundreds of blows and stripes on the feet. When the slaves saw the consul who was so tenderly devoted to them suffering so much,

they came with their little savings and pledged themselves to a perpetual captivity to save him.

Some of the other disciples of Saint Vincent—Mr. Philippe le Vacher, brother of the consul at Tunis, and himself afterwards consul at Algiers; Mr. Huguier, formerly a solicitor, and afterwards a priest and martyr—threw themselves into the work of relieving the slaves, and soon not only Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, but Tetouan, Tangiers, Biserte, Salé, and even the smallest ports, had priests and pious laymen working for their amelioration. Saint Vincent was the soul of it all. He encouraged them with his counsel and sustained them by his praise. He multiplied his letters to Father le Vacher, Father Novelli and Brother Barreau, and at the same time went about Paris collecting money to send it to them and save them from insults or imprisonment. When Father le Vacher was ignominiously chased out of Tunis, and Brother Barreau beaten and cast into prison, the saint went to Mazarin, Anne of Austria and young Louis XIV. He represented to them that it was a disgrace to a nation like France to allow her consuls to be treated in such a manner. The letters, however, which he induced them to send to the Sultan at Constantinople, to the Beys of Algiers and Tunis, were, alas! as fruitless as the treaties already so audaciously broken.

While Saint Vincent de Paul was thus labouring to ameliorate the sad lot of the slaves, by one of his most beautiful acts of kindness, his room in Saint-Lazare had literally become a post-office for Africa. He received the letters of slaves for their friends at home, he sent their answers back, and all that at his own expense. But it was not only letters but money that he received and sent for the slaves and their friends. He became their banker and treasurer, and it is most touching to see to what a

pitch he carried on the correspondence. For example, he writes: "We have received a crown for Renaud le Page, and another for Lesueur, both galley-slaves on the *Duke;* I must ask Mr. Huguier to give it to them." "*P.S.*—I have just received a letter with thirty livres for Martin de Laucre; would you be so kind as to give it to him? Also twenty-one livres for Vincent Traverse; I am writing to Mr. Huguier to give it to him." Again: "This is a bill of exchange for a hundred livres, payable to you by Mr. Abeille; you will please send that sum to Algiers for Nicolas Renouard to enable him to return to France. We have also received a letter containing a crown for Martin de Laucre, galley-slave on the *Mercares*, at present stationed at Marseilles; I beg of you to give it to him." In another place: "I shall vouch your account and see that it is correct; it is necessary to add, first for Pierre Legros, known as Lapointi, four crowns which we have received here, and secondly, over seven livres for Father Esbran, a galley-slave on the *Baillibaude;* I am writing to Mr. Huguier to give both these sums to their owners." "I beg of you also to send to the brothers Jean and Bernard de la Roquette 506 livres, to be expended in releasing the elder. You will be so kind as to take this sum from the gross amount which you have." Again: "We have got over ten livres for Renaud le Page, three livres for Jacques Maugé, and three hundred livres for Father Esbran, all slaves. Send us Mr. Huguier's account since our last payment, and I shall forward as much as we can afford."

"Mme. de Romilly has just sent us fifty livres to ransom her son, who is a slave in Tunis. Give them to Father le Vacher."

Again: "O sir! when will you be able to send us Dominique de Laius? When will you give him back

to his wife and six children ? Can you not induce his master to accept less than six hundred piastres ? That is very high for a person who has nothing of his own, for whatever you have already received for him is entirely made up from alms. Release him, I beg of you, as soon as possible, and send him back to France on the first opportunity. Advance whatever is necessary, and, if need be, borrow it, and I shall send on immediately what you require. See also about the money I sent for the person who was most in danger of apostatising."

We could quote more than fifty similar letters. The humble room of Saint Vincent de Paul had become a bureau for letters to and from the slaves and for alms to release them. At the same time he was establishing for them a hospital at Algiers and another at Tunis.

The solicitude of our saint to ameliorate the material condition of the slaves was nothing in comparison to his anxiety for the interests of their souls. He knew how exposed they were to forget God, to despair, to blasphemy and apostasy. In the year 1649, at Algiers, there were close on 10,000 apostates, at Tunis 1800, and at Salé and Tripoli between five and six hundred. But the children of Saint Vincent were not long among the slaves till things became changed. Faith was revived, and repentance sprung up. Slaves were to be seen heroically abjuring their apostasy even at the risk of their lives. At their own expense they erected in each galley a little chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was preserved, and a lamp burned before it day and night. Sundays and feasts were observed with great poverty, no doubt, but with extraordinary piety. Often the entire night was spent in hearing confessions, for the masters would not allow even an hour to the slaves during the day. "We heard," writes Father Guérin, " on Easter Sunday, that a

galley from Algiers had arrived at Biserte. I immediately set out to visit the poor Christians on board, and found three hundred. I took with me a priest to help me, and we gave all their Easter duty, with the exception of some Greek schismatics. O God! what a consolation to see the devotion of these poor captives, most of them for a long time, some even ten and twenty years, deprived of the sacraments. I made them leave the galleys and come ashore every day, in order to receive holy communion in a private house where I said mass."[1]

We may well imagine that amid this renewal of faith and devotion among the galley-slaves, the name of France was not forgotten. "You will be delighted to hear," wrote Father Guérin to Saint Vincent, "that on Sundays and feasts the *Exaudiat* and other prayers for the King may be heard in our chapels. Even foreigners manifest the greatest esteem and regard for him. It would also be most gratifying to you to witness the devotion with which the poor slaves pray for their benefactors, who, as they recognise, come for the most part from France. Certainly it is no little consolation to see here all nationalities praying for our country."

But it was not merely piety that was to be found among the galleys, but a spirit of faith so exalted that it ambitioned martyrdom. Of this we have beautiful examples. At Algiers a young man, about twenty-two years, named Pierre Bourgoing, just as he was being carried off to the galleys at Constantinople, had a fit of despair. He went to the Pacha and asked to be released and not sent to the galleys. The Pacha consented on condition that he would apostatise, and used every means to induce him to do so. Finally, after threats and promises, the poor slave gave in and re-

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 392.

nounced the faith. However, this poor young man always preserved in his heart sentiments of veneration and love for his religion, for it was only through weakness and fear that he had denied it. He even declared that though he was exteriorly a Turk, yet within he was a Christian. By degrees he began to have remorse for his sin, and touched with true repentance, he resolved to expiate it by death rather than continue in his state of infidelity. He commenced to speak openly of his contempt for Mahometanism, even in presence of Turks. He sometimes feared the cruelties of these barbarians, and the terrors which awaited him made him tremble. "But no matter," said he, "I hope that our Lord will assist me. He died for me, it is only right I should die for Him." At last urged by remorse of conscience and a desire of repairing the scandal he had given, he took the noble resolution of going to the Pacha and addressing him in these words: "You have seduced me in making me renounce my religion, which is true, and in embracing yours, which is false. Now I declare that I am a Christian; and to show you that, I abjure with all my heart the religion of the Turks, and cast you back the turban which you gave me." While saying this he threw the turban at the Pacha's feet, and then added: "I know you will kill me, but no matter, I am ready to suffer any torments for my Saviour Jesus Christ." The Pacha, enraged at such hardihood, condemned him at once to be burned. They immediately stript him of his clothes, and putting a chain round his neck, forced him to drag the beam on which he was to be burned. As he passed out of the Pacha's house in this condition, he was surrounded by a large crowd of Turks, renegades, and Christians. Raising his voice he repeated those beautiful words: "Live Jesus Christ! May the Roman Catholic

and Apostolic Church triumph for ever! There is no other in which one can be saved!" With these words on his lips he fearlessly met the flames and suffered death for Christ.

Now one of the noblest sentiments of this young man was that which he expressed to his companions, thus: "Although I know death is before me, yet I feel something within" (and here he placed his hand on his forehead) "telling me that God will give me the grace to bear whatever suffering awaits me; I trust in His aid and goodness." He was then tied to the beam and the fire kindled, which soon ended his martyrdom and sent his soul to the judgment-seat of God, purified as gold in the furnace. Father le Vacher was present, and gave him absolution while suffering his cruel torments.

"Behold, gentlemen," exclaimed Saint Vincent in relating this martyrdom, "how a Christian has acted." [1]

Other martyrdoms were no less beautiful. "Not very long ago," writes Father Guérin in 1646, "in order to compel a poor woman to renounce Jesus Christ, these barbarians gave her more than five hundred lashes. Not content with that, two of them trampled on her till at last she gloriously ended her life for Jesus Christ." The same Father Guérin wrote in June 1647: "We have here a little boy from Marseilles, aged thirteen years, who since he was captured has endured more than a thousand strokes for the faith of Jesus Christ. To force him to renounce it they tore the flesh off his arm and then condemned him to four hundred lashes or to become a Turk. I went at once to his master, and throwing myself on my knees before him, begged of him to relent. He consented to surrender him for two hundred piastres, but not having that, I had to borrow at interest a hundred

[1] Abelly, vol. i. pp. 374–376.

crowns, and a merchant gave me the rest." In another letter to Saint Vincent, Father le Vacher says: "A vessel having been shipwrecked off Tunis, six men who were saved fell into the hands of the Moors, who sold them as slaves. Some time afterwards the Bey, wishing to make them Turks, forced two of them by beatings to renounce the faith of Jesus Christ. Two others bravely died under their sufferings rather than consent to such infidelity. The remaining two were in such danger of losing the faith that we felt bound in charity to come to their assistance, and so have arranged their release by paying six hundred piastres, for two hundred of which I am responsible. They are now at liberty. For my part I should prefer to suffer in this world than to witness their apostasy, and would willingly give my life, nay, a thousand lives if I had them, rather than permit Christians to lose what Christ has purchased for them by His death."[1]

It was not only for their faith that the poor slaves died, but also to preserve their purity and chastity. "I must tell you," writes Father Guérin to Saint Vincent, "that in August 1646 a second Joseph was sacrificed in Tunis. He had resisted the most violent solicitations of his master's wretched wife, and had received over five hundred lashes on account of her false reports about him. Finally he gained a glorious victory in preferring to die rather than offend God. For three days he was chained in prison, where I visited him and exhorted him to suffer anything rather than be faithless to God. He went to confession and holy communion, and expressed those sentiments to me: 'Father, they may persecute me as they wish, I will die a Christian.' When brought to the place of execution he again went to confession, and God gave him the consolation of my

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 403.

being present at his death—a privilege rarely granted by those barbarians. His last words, as he raised his eyes to heaven, were : 'O God, I am innocent.' He died most courageously, never showing the slightest impatience under his cruel torments. We paid the greatest honours to his remains. His wicked accuser was not long without receiving her punishment, for her master on returning immediately had her strangled. This young man, aged twenty-two, was a Portuguese. I invoke his aid, and as he loved us on earth, I hope he will love us no less in heaven."[1]

Another martyrdom no less beautiful took place shortly afterwards. "A young slave being solicited and almost forced by his master to commit a terrible sin, resisted courageously, and in the end, in order to escape, hit his assailant in the face. Then the wicked man in his rage went to the judge, and accused the slave of attempting to murder him. Instead of condemning the master for his cruelty, the slave was sentenced to be burned to death—a martyrdom he bore with the greatest fortitude."[2]

"Two young Englishmen," writes Father Guérin, "have been converted, and they are an example to all the other Catholics. There is a third only eleven years old ; he is one of the most amiable children and one of the most fervent Christians. He continually invokes the Blessed Virgin, that through her he may obtain the grace to die rather than deny Jesus Christ. This his master uses every means to make him do, having twice beaten him unmercifully for that end. On the last occasion he said to his master whilst he was beating him : 'Cut off my head if you will, for I am a Christian, and will never be anything else.' He has protested to me several times

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 388. [2] *Id.*, p. 389.

that he would expire under the blows sooner than deny his divine Saviour. His whole life is beautiful, especially at an age so tender; I may truly say he is a temple of the Holy Spirit."[1]

We shall conclude with the following history of two friends. "There were at Tunis two children, about fifteen years old, one born in France, the other in England. Both had been carried away from their country, and sold to two masters who lived near each other. Age, neighbourhood and similarity of fortune united them so closely that two brothers could not love each other more. The English boy, who was a Lutheran, was converted by his French companion. He was instructed by Father le Vacher, and so confirmed in the faith, that when English merchants came to Tunis to ransom the captives of their religion he boldly declared that he preferred to live and die a slave rather than renounce the Catholic faith.

"These two young friends saw each other as often as possible. Their conversations usually turned upon the happiness of always preserving their faith, and of courageously professing it without fearing the torments to which they might be subjected. It would seem that God was thus preparing them for the trials which awaited them. Their masters, urged on by the evil one, redoubled their cruel treatment in order to force them to deny Jesus Christ. They carried their cruelties to such an extent that sometimes the brave boys lay on the ground more dead than alive. The young French lad having been one day overwhelmed with blows, and left for dead on the spot, his companion, who often stole away to console him, found him in this pitiable state. He called him by his name to ascertain whether he was

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 396.

still alive. The sound of the voice awoke him from his insensibility; but as he was not perfectly conscious of what had happened, and did not know why he was called, his first words were a profession of faith: 'I am a Christian for life,' he exclaimed. At these words the little English boy threw himself at his feet, and bruised and bloody as they were, kissed them with respectful tenderness. Some Turks, who surprised him in the act, having asked what he was doing, 'I am honouring,' he replied, 'the members which have suffered for Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my God.' Irritated by such an answer they drove him out with injuries, which was an additional affliction for the French lad, who was consoled by his presence. As soon as he was able to walk he paid a visit to his friend. He found him in the same condition in which, a short time before, he had himself been found; that is to say, stretched upon a mat, half dead from the blows he had received, and surrounded by Turks who feasted on the cruel spectacle. At the sight his courage and faith were excited, and he asked his friend, in presence of the infidels, which he loved better, Jesus Christ or Mahomet. 'Jesus Christ,' replied the English lad; 'I am a Christian, and I will die a Christian.' The Turks became desperate at this language, and one of them, who had two knives in his belt, threatened to cut off the French boy's ears. He had already advanced to do it, when the young hero took the instrument from him, himself cut off one of his ears, and asked the barbarians if they would have him cut off the other. He was ready to do so, to show his veneration and love for his religion, and his determination to die rather than deny it.

"The courage of these two young Christians so astonished the infidels that they gave up all hope of

making them abandon the faith of Jesus Christ. They spoke to them no more of religion, and God, having thus tried their fidelity, took them to Himself the following year. They died of a contagious malady, and went to wear in heaven the crown which they had so nobly won on earth."[1]

Such faith and heroic courage delighted the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul. He poured forth his joy and gratitude in his letters, and congratulated the missioners with the greatest enthusiasm. But, O God, what expense, what fatigue, what sweat and blood were necessary to gain such results! "Alas!" wrote Father le Vacher, "how far more usefully would even a part of the millions which are spent in vanities and delicacies be employed here in aiding these poor souls living in such misery! I have endeavoured, by the grace of God, to assist the men and women as far as in me lies. In this country we must buy with ready money the permission to aid these poor unfortunates, and pay a large sum even to be allowed to speak to them. We have likewise to pay when we want the galley-slaves released in order that they may come one by one to confession and to receive holy communion." The same holy priest wrote on another occasion: "Two galleys set out last winter having on board five hundred Christian slaves. All of them, thank God, were put in the state of grace before starting. Oh, how sad a voyage that must have been for them, and how many lashes they received! The French slaves are no better treated, but they are criminals, while the slaves in Barbary suffer for no other reason than because they are Christians and faithful to God. The day on which those poor slaves communicated I entertained them at a modest feast, and gave to each galley a store

[1] Abelly, vol. i. pp. 398–400.

of white biscuits for those who might become ill on the voyage."[1]

Where was money for all this to be found? But Saint Vincent de Paul always found it. To this work alone the Duchess d'Aiguillon at one time gave 14,000 livres, and at another 40,000. A business man of Paris, who concealed his name, came one morning to Saint-Lazare and gave 30,000 livres. And how shall we reckon the small sums which came in every day? France was moved, and could no longer refuse help. Thus Saint Vincent was able to release twelve hundred of the most abandoned slaves, and to send to his missioners for the solace of those unfortunate captives nearly 1,200,000 livres.

But the redemption of these captives cost not only money but blood. Almost every day Saint Vincent learned of the sufferings or martyrdom of one of his missioners. "We should be burned," wrote Father Novelli, "if the Turks caught us exercising our religion." Again: "We could not attempt to go out in our habits without being followed by a crowd who stoned and spat upon us." While going to the galleys Father Guérin was met and almost strangled by a mob. One day Father le Vacher was summoned before the Bey. "Leave the city," said he to him, "and never put foot into it again. I have learned that by your artifices you prevented some of the Christians from embracing our religion." Father Guérin was detained in prison for a month, with the intention of ultimately burning him. In a word, all the missioners were constantly exposed to be burned, to the lash, or to some other torment, and thus they lived in fear and trembling. When they did not die of exhaustion or of blows they succumbed to pestilence. Father

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 391.

Novelli, as we have said, died at the age of thirty, having had only one year of labour among the slaves. Fathers le Sage and Dieppe, who were sent to fill the vacancy, died the next year, carried off by fever. Father Guérin, who had narrowly escaped the block, died in his turn, only regretting that he was not martyred. "He was one of the noblest souls, the most detached from creatures, and devoted to God and his neighbour, that I have ever known. 'Oh, what a loss to the poor and to us!' exclaimed Saint Vincent."

Pestilence only lasted for a time, but not so with the injustice and cruelty of the Turks. The title of consul was no exemption; on the contrary, it was an additional danger. Feeling secure at such a distance from France, the Beys of Algiers and Tunis neglected nothing to embitter the consul's position and thus force him to vacate it. We have already seen that Father le Vacher was ignominiously chased from Tunis. On another occasion, when a chevalier of Malta had carried off over two hundred and fifty piastres, the Bey summoned him to his presence. "You shall procure them for me," said the Bey. On the consul replying that he was not responsible, "Say what you like," continued the Bey, "but if you don't get them you shall pay for it with your life." Mr. Husson, another consul, was likewise ignominiously chased out of Tunis without any form of trial. Father le Vacher did not escape, for the cruel savages martyred him at the mouth of a cannon.

Now these consuls were the representatives of Louis XIV., men who were to uphold the dignity of France. This was a source of great humiliation to Saint Vincent de Paul, and he was advised to discontinue a work in which he vainly strove to interest Mazarin and Louis XIV. "Oh no," replied the saint to a missioner who

wrote to him ; "the motives you allege are insufficient to convince me that we should abandon the work which we have begun. If the salvation of a single soul is of such importance as that we should expose our lives to secure it, how can we abandon such a number on account of the expense ?" He further added this beautiful reason : "Were it to produce no other good than to show that unhappy land the beauty of our holy religion, in sending men who, leaving home and comforts, traverse dangerous seas and expose themselves to such cruelties in order to console their afflicted brethren, in my opinion such men and money would be well employed."

Far from abandoning the work for the slaves, seeing that he could no longer count on the Government, he conceived the bold idea of raising a fleet himself to chastise the Turks. He opened negotiations with an intrepid captain named Chevalier Paul. This man had risen from the ranks and attained the high post of Vice-Admiral of the Fleet in the Levant. Saint Vincent met him one day at Cardinal Mazarin's, and confided to him his project. Such a bold expedition was highly pleasing to Chevalier Paul, who listened to the plan with the greatest enthusiasm. Saint Vincent immediately set about collecting money, and in order to make the undertaking doubly safe, procured from Cardinal Mazarin and Louis XIV., through the Duchess d'Aiguillon, an understanding that the expedition would bear a quasi-official seal. A number of the saint's letters at this period are to encourage Chevalier Paul, and concerning the necessary preparation. "I beg of you," he wrote to Father Get, Superior at Marseilles, "to see the Chevalier on my behalf, and to congratulate him ; say that he alone could undertake such a work, and that his courage and talent give reason to hope that the enter-

prise will have a happy issue. . . . You probably shall have heard of the treatment of Brother Barreau, consul at Algiers, and you might remark to the chevalier that such insults to France will be put an end to by him; in fine, that no work could be more pleasing to God."[1] Again he writes: "I have been consoled by the letter in which you tell me that you went to Toulon and saw Chevalier Paul. It seems to me that you could not have acted more prudently than you did. I thank God, sir, that you have found this man so disposed and ready to go to Barbary to do as you say. I am deliberating whether I should write to thank him, but I feel I cannot adequately express my esteem and admiration for him. I shall content myself with saying mass, to thank God, and to beseech His divine goodness to preserve him for the welfare of the State, and to bless his aims more and more."[2]

Everything was almost ready, when Saint Vincent died, and the expedition fell through. But the project did not die with our saint. Revived by the pious Duchess d'Aiguillon, transmitted by her to the Duke of Beaufort, and taken up still more vigorously by Tourville, it was first put into execution by Admiral Duquesne. He bombarded Algiers, and forced the Turks to capitulate. This aroused the enthusiasm of Christians, especially in France. Bossuet, in his funeral oration of Queen Marie-Thérèse, thus speaks of it: "Before Louis, France, almost without a navy, vainly kept the seas; now from the rising to the setting of the sun her victorious fleet covers the ocean, and French valour spreads terror everywhere. You shall yield or fall before this conqueror, Algiers, rich with the spoils of Christianity. In your avaricious heart you said, 'I hold the seas, and the

[1] "Letters," vol. iv. p. 25. [2] *Id.*, p. 76.

nations are my prey.' The swiftness of your ships emboldened you, but now you shall be attacked under your very walls, like a wild bird in his rocky nest as he carries his spoil to the young. Louis has already rent asunder the chains that bound his subjects, born to be free. Your houses are no longer but a heap of ruins. In your brutal fury you turned against yourself, and know not how to glut your fruitless rage. But we shall end such brigandage, and the astonished mariner shall cry out, 'Who is like unto Tyre!' and yet she is to be conquered by the armies of Louis."[1] Alas! a hundred and fifty years had yet to roll by before all these patriotic plans of Saint Vincent were realised by the grandson of Louis XIV. Speaking of Blessed Pierre Fourrier, Lacordaire said: "God be praised! in a village curé is found the heart of a Roman consul." With still greater reason we may say: "In a poor old man of eighty-five is found the heart of a king."

The children of Saint Vincent, ever faithful to follow in the footsteps of their father, continued to labour for the assistance of the slaves in Barbary, down to the year 1830, when the capture of Algiers put an end to the Mussulman pirates.

[1] Bossuet, vol. xii. p. 513.

CHAPTER II

SPREAD OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION—SAINT VINCENT SENDS HIS PRIESTS TO IRELAND, SCOTLAND, POLAND, ITALY AND MADAGASCAR

At the same time that Saint Vincent de Paul was sending some of his priests to sustain Christians groaning under the heavy yoke of the Turk, he was sending others to Ireland and Scotland to aid Catholics suffering cruel persecutions at the hands of Protestants. Innocent X. suggested this idea to our saint, who readily acceded. Saint Vincent, during his long life, had witnessed England's extraordinary religious instability. For fifteen centuries Catholic, she had, as a nation and without resistance, abandoned her ancient faith at the bidding of her King, the wretched and apostate Henry VIII. Twenty years afterwards, under Mary, with the same facility, she returned to the Catholic faith. Again, when Elizabeth succeeded, England adopted Protestantism, and now she was ready under Charles I. to return to the true religion. Charles was about to marry Henrietta of France, and the Catholics of England did not conceal their joy. By an act of imprudence for which she paid dearly, the young Queen made her solemn entry into London, surrounded by bishops and priests, among whom were Father de Bérulle and twelve Oratorians. By the marriage contract it was stipulated that full liberty was to be given to the Catholic religion, and the Queen's first act was the erection of a beautiful chapel in her palace. "On the

arrival of the Queen," says Bossuet, "Catholics breathed more freely. The chapel which she had built, gave to the Church its ancient standing, and this worthy child of Saint Louis, nobly sustaining the reputation of Catholic France, reanimated those around her by her example and her prayers. The Oratorians, led by the illustrious Cardinal de Bérulle, and the Capuchins, were zealously reviving the true worship, and restored to the altars their becoming decoration. The zealous priests and religious, those indefatigable pastors of the afflicted flock, hitherto poor and wandering all over the country, came now to resume their holy functions in the chapel of their Queen. The Church, till then persecuted, and scarcely free even to deplore its past glory, was made to boldly repeat the canticles of Sion in a foreign land. Conversions were innumerable, and eye-witnesses testified that in the Chapel Royal over three hundred converts were received, not to speak of others who abjured their errors."[1] A bishop publicly officiated in the heart of London, and confirmed eighteen thousand Catholics.[2] It seemed a bright future, and Bossuet says so in his funeral oration of the Queen: "If my judgment does not deceive me, comparing the past with the present, I presume to think, and I notice the wise concur with me, that the days of darkness are passing, and those of light returning."[3]

It was to advance this movement that Innocent X., at the request of the Queen, directed Saint Vincent to send some of his missioners, of whom he had heard such wonders. Our saint hastened to obey; but instead of sending them to England, where already the Oratorians,

[1] Bosssuet, *Œuvres*, vol. xii. p. 445.
[2] Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vol. xi. p. 262.
[3] Bossuet, vol. xii. p. 446.

Capuchins and Jesuits were labouring, he divided them into two parties, and sent one to Ireland and the other to Scotland.

From the time of Henry VIII., Ireland had begun her long martyrdom. Neither promises, threats, confiscation of property, nor even death was sufficient to tear from her her liberty and her faith. After partial insurrections to throw off the hateful yoke, she was about to make, in 1641, a supreme effort. By the summons *Pro Deo, et rege et patria!* she showed that it was not her intention to separate from England and the King, but that in their union she wished to preserve her liberty and her faith. The war was declared just and equitable by a national council assembled at Kilkenny, but the issue of the contest was unhappy. Ireland was overpowered by superior forces. She saw her lands seized, her bishops and priests condemned to death, her sons and daughters shipped to America, and the noble defenders of her cities shut up in dungeons. But what violence against the faith! Since the marriage of Henrietta of France with Charles, Ireland had hoped for better times for the religion to which she had always, even at such sacrifices, so gloriously clung. It was therefore just the moment for the arrival of the Congregation of the Mission. To console the victims, to sustain the weak, to prepare the future martyrs—here indeed was a beautiful field of labour for the zeal of the Vincentians. As the Duchess d'Aiguillon had furnished means for the African missions, so did Mmes. Lamoignon and de Herse for the Irish. Eight Vincentians, five of them Irishmen, set out for Limerick and Cashel. The bishops of these two sees had earnestly petitioned for the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. At Limerick the success of the missioners was most marked. People came not

only from the cities, but from the surrounding district, in order to hear the sermons, which were "simple, clear and pathetic," and the catechetical instructions, which were "familiar and solid." They likewise came to make general confessions, and it was computed that the missioners heard twenty thousand. Sometimes it was necessary for them to remain days and even weeks in the same place, so great was the number anxious to make a general confession. It was the same at Cashel and the other towns, where they heard eighty thousand general confessions, not to speak of other blessings which they brought on the places they visited. Of those we must always remain in ignorance, inasmuch as Saint Vincent forbade the missioners to write an account of their labours, saying, "It is enough that God knows what is being done; besides, the blood of these martyrs shall not be forgotten with Him, and sooner or later it will bear its fruit in new Catholics."[1] That prophecy was fulfilled. Soon afterwards, when Cromwell was named Protector, new and terrible persecutions were in store for the Irish Church. The missioners had to fly and to conceal themselves as best they could, but the fruits of their labours did not depart with them. Not a single Irish priest abandoned his flock, but stood faithfully by it till his people were banished or hanged because they would not deny the faith. The Mayor and three of the principal men of Limerick were hanged. They mounted the scaffold clothed in their robes, to manifest to all the joy they felt in dying for God, and they addressed those present in words that drew tears from all, even from the heretics. They declared that they died in defence of the Catholic religion, and by their example strengthened others in their resolution to suffer anything and everything rather

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 418.

than prove faithless to God.[1] Such noble deaths have not been in vain. Encouraged by the remembrance of them, Ireland has withstood three centuries of robbery and persecution, and to-day she is as Catholic and as faithful as ever.

The entry of the Priests of the Mission into Scotland in 1651 was more difficult. Scotland had not defended her faith like Ireland, but had yielded at the first stroke. The so-called Reformation had taken a firm footing in the country, and Knox and his disciple Melvil lost no time in setting fire to churches, banishing or massacring bishops and priests, and offering large sums of money for the capture of even a single priest. The Priests of the Mission therefore embarked from Holland instead of Calais, to attract less notice, and arrived in Scotland disguised as merchants. A young Scotch Catholic named MacDonnell acted as their guide and interpreter. Soon, however, he was recognised by an apostate priest, and had to hide himself. The two Vincentian missioners Father Duggan and Father White then deliberated, and came to the conclusion that the safest course was to separate. Father White remained in the mainland, while Father Duggan went to the Hebrides. The priests having been banished from these islands, apostates were sent in their place, but the poverty was so great that they soon disappeared, and for fifty years the people had lived without religion, priests, worship, even in ignorance of the very name of our Saviour. Persons of eighty and a hundred years were to be met who had never been baptized.[2] Father Duggan, assisted by two men—one to row the boat, or on land to carry the vestments, the other to act as catechist and servant—began to go from island to island. His journeys were sometimes four or five

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 417. [2] *Id.*, p. 464.

leagues, over rough and heavy roads, and often before mass. The life he led was indeed heroic. "One meal a day, consisting of rough oaten bread with a little cheese or butter. Sometimes, when travelling in lonely mountain districts, he had absolutely nothing. Never, or almost never, had he wine, for it was only to be found with the rich, and the accommodation was so wretched as to disgust one. Then he could not procure meat, except to purchase a whole sheep; and how was he to carry that on his journeys? Fish was plentiful, but the people were either unable or unwilling to procure it."[1] Fortunately, spiritual consolation sustained him amid such poverty. At Uist he converted the lord of that island, Donald Macdonell, his wife, children and all his dependants. At Eigg and Canna he converted eight or nine hundred, while at Moidart, Arisaig, Morar, Knoydart and Glengarry all were converted and ready to receive instruction. There were six or seven thousand souls in this district, who were so far away that they were almost inaccessible. At Barra the people were so naturally religious that it was most astonishing. "It was sufficient," writes Father Duggan, "to teach the Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed to one child in each village, and in a few days all the inhabitants, both old and young, would know it. I have received the principal persons into the Church, and among others the young lord and his brothers and sisters. Among these converts is the son of a minister, whose devotion gives great edification. I usually defer holy communion for some time, in order to have an interval after the general confession, so that they may be better instructed and disposed for a second confession, and to excite in them a greater desire and love of holy communion."[2] Father Duggan was preparing to go still

[1] Maynard, vol. iii. pp. 45–46. [2] Abelly, vol. i. p. 468.

farther, as far as Pabbay, where the difficulties and dangers were even still greater; but God was satisfied with his good intentions. Like Moses about to enter the Promised Land, like Saint Francis Xavier in sight of China, Father Duggan died in sight of Pabbay, on May 17, 1657. He was buried in the island of Uist, and a chapel is dedicated to his memory.

Saint Vincent de Paul learned of this missioner's death with profound grief, and at once announced it to his Congregation. "Father Duggan has died while labouring in the Hebrides, where it may be said he worked wonders. These poor islanders, both old and young, have deplored him as their father. We must remain in ignorance about the fruit of his labours, or rather what God has effected by him, for people are obliged to write of religious topics in very obscure terms, on account of the English, who cruelly persecute Catholics, but still more so priests, when they discover them."

During all this time Father White was living concealed in the mainland of Scotland, and going at night from house to house consoling the Catholics by the sacraments and words of encouragement. "I went even," he writes, "to the Orkney Islands, and have already visited the counties of Moray, Ross and Caithness, where there has not been a priest for a long time, and scarcely a Catholic. But just as I was beginning my labours I had to desist at once, in consequence of a new and violent outbreak against the Catholics at the instigation of the ministers, who had obtained from Cromwell a mandate addressed to all the judges and magistrates of Scotland. It was as follows: "It has been represented to us that many persons, especially in the South, have passed over to Popery. Desirous of stopping this, the judges are commanded to make diligent search, par-

ticularly for priests, whom they shall imprison, and at once punish according to law." Father White was soon arrested and put in prison. "We recommend to your prayers," writes Saint Vincent de Paul, "our dear confrère, Father White. While labouring in the mountain districts of Scotland he was taken prisoner, together with a Jesuit, by the English heretics. They were brought to Aberdeen, where Father Lumsden shall not fail to visit and console our dear confrère. There are many Catholics in Scotland who do all they can for the poor suffering priests. This good missioner now runs the chance of being a martyr. I know not whether we should rejoice or be sad; for on the one side God is honoured in the state in which he is detained, since it is for His love; and the Congregation will indeed be happy if God finds him worthy of the martyr's crown; and he himself also, to suffer and sacrifice everything, as he does, for God. Behold how God acts. When some one has served Him in an heroic degree, He gives him the cross, suffering and shame. Ah, gentlemen and my brothers, there must indeed be something beyond our comprehension in persecution, since God usually repays His noblest followers by afflictions, imprisonment and martyrdom. He does so in order to elevate to a high degree the perfection and glory of those who give themselves perfectly to Him."

It was the law that a priest should not be put to death, except if arrested in the act of saying mass. Now such was not the case with Father White, so he was released, but on condition that if he were discovered preaching or baptizing, he should be hanged without further trial.[1] This threat was not enough to frighten the zealous missioner, and he again set out for the mountain districts.

[1] Father White's portrait hung in Invergarry Castle, in a chamber known as "Mr. White's room," until the castle was burned down in 1745.

"We must thank God," immediately wrote Saint Vincent, "for thus delivering His servant, and also for having among us one who is found worthy of suffering so much for God. This noble missioner was not deterred by the fear of death, but returned at once to preach as before. Oh, what reason we have to thank our Saviour for having given to this Congregation the spirit of martyrs! What a grace! What a divine and dazzling light to be enabled to see the greatness of dying, like our Lord, for our neighbour! Let us thank God, then, and beseech Him to bestow on each one of us this same grace to suffer and to die for the salvation of souls."

While Saint Vincent de Paul, like the general of an army, was sending his best followers to confront the horrors of Algiers and Tunis, and the dangers in Ireland and Scotland, he was asked by Marie Louise de Gonzagua, the new Queen of Poland, to establish some of his priests in her kingdom. This princess had been a member of the Ladies' Association of Charity, and also under the direction of our saint. Hence, at the same time that she was introducing French art, literature, fashion and taste into her court, she also wished Saint Vincent to send her his Priests of the Mission, the Sisters of Charity and the Nuns of the Visitation. Our saint, who had a paternal tenderness for the young Queen, chose as the leader of a band of missioners Father Lambert, his assistant, and a man of tried virtue, of exceptional humility, prudence and heroic self-sacrifice. Though the saint, now in his seventy-fifth year, deeply regretted being separated from a man upon whom he felt confident in relying, yet he did not hesitate to give him to the Queen of Poland. With Father Lambert he joined some other priests of great virtue, and they at once set out for Poland (1651). After experiencing

difficulties, of which it is useless to speak here, they arrived in Poland while a plague was at its height. The Queen was anxious that the missioners should remain away from the affected districts, but Father Lambert, feeling that his post was amid the plague-stricken, at once set out for Warsaw, where the pestilence was raging. Her Majesty wrote immediately to Saint Vincent: "The noble-hearted Father Lambert, seeing the distress our people were in, insisted on going to Warsaw to aid the poor. I have given orders that he should be lodged at the castle, in the King's apartments. I receive news from him every day, and I am urging him not to expose his life. He has everything necessary, and I am pressing him to come here as soon as possible. Were it not for the plague, our designs should have been accomplished by this time. The Sisters of Charity, I am glad to say, arrived two days ago." These sisters began with an act of virtue which might have wounded the Queen, but only served to edify her. After a few days' rest she said to them: "It is now time to begin our work. I see you are three, so I intend to retain Sister Margaret, and allow the other two to go to Cracow for the service of the poor."—"Ah, madam," replied Sister Margaret, "what is this you are saying? The three of us must serve the poor; you have plenty who can attend on your Majesty. Permit us, madam, to act as God demands of us, and as we do elsewhere." The Queen persisted in her arrangement; but seeing the sister beginning to cry, she said, "What! sister, do you refuse to serve me?"—"Pardon me, madam, but we have given ourselves to God to serve the poor." Moved to tears, the Queen then allowed the three to set out to help the plague-stricken.

But soon the pestilence was the least of their dangers, for now war broke out. And what a war! Russia, with

her immense army of Cossacks, on the one side, and Protestant Sweden, with the veteran troops of the great Gustavus Adolphus, on the other. On the one side Greek schism, on the other heresy, and between them Poland. The Queen boldly set out with the King, but she wished that Father Lambert, in whom she had every confidence, should accompany them. He did so, though worn out by fatigue in the midst of the plague, and soon, notwithstanding the anxious care of the Queen, he died the death of a saint on Jan. 31, 1653. Saint Vincent at once wrote to all the houses: "The good Father Lambert died on Jan. 31, having been only three days ill, but so grievous was his malady that it would be impossible for him to hold out any length of time. He received all the sacraments from Father Desdames. The Queen's confessor has informed me that the sorrow is universal, and it is the opinion of all that it would be difficult to find a more worthy ecclesiastic. It might be truly said of him, that he was, '*Dilectus Deo et hominibus, cujus memoria in benedictione est.*' He sought God alone, and nobody in so short a time won such esteem and favour with their Majesties. He was a universal favourite, for everywhere he passed he left the odour of his great virtues. These are the sentiments of this great doctor; and the Queen herself has written me a long letter extolling our confrère's virtue, and concluding with these words: 'In fine, if you do not send me another Father Lambert I shall no longer be able to do anything.' Such words show the esteem she had for him."

To replace Father Lambert Saint Vincent chose Father Ozenne, a missioner of exalted virtue, and desired him to start at once. He arrived in Poland just at the moment that the political situation was becoming more and more grave. Protestantism, already supreme

in England, Denmark, Sweden and Holland, favoured by Richelieu and Mazarin, was now on the point of taking possession of Poland, and thus of dominating Europe. In the midst of these misfortunes we may hear the sighs of Saint Vincent de Paul: "O gentlemen! does it not seem to you that God wishes to transfer His Church into other countries? Yes, if we do not change, it is to be feared that He will take her away, for we are witnessing these powerful enemies of the Church forcing their entrance. We ought to fear that God has raised up for our punishment this tyrant King of Sweden, who in less than four months has invaded a good part of this great kingdom. God made use of these our enemies before for the same end. The Goths, Visigoths and Vandals came from these regions, and God made use of them twelve hundred years ago to chastise His Church. From what we see at present we ought to be on our guard. A kingdom of such extent invaded within a space of four months! O Lord! who knows what is in store for us?" Every day our saint received letters which told of the sickness, fatigue and exhaustion of the sisters amid the ravages of the plague, and of the robbery and violence used against the Priests of the Mission. Fathers Ozenne, Desdames and Duperroy were subjected to frightful indignities, being despoiled of their very clothes. The saint made use of these examples to stimulate the virtue and self-sacrifice of those who remained in Paris. "Behold, gentlemen," he said, "how indifferent these priests are to life or death, but humbly resigned to the will of God. They show no sign of impatience or complaint; on the contrary, they seem ready to suffer still more. Are we in the like sentiments? Are we prepared to endure the trials which God shall send us, to stifle the promptings of nature, and to live no longer but for

Jesus Christ? Are we ready to go to Poland, Barbary, or the Indies, to sacrifice our ease and our lives? If we are, let us thank God; but if not—if there are some who fear to abandon their comforts, who are so tender as to complain when they want for the least thing, so careful about themselves that they wish to change their houses and employments because the air does not suit them, the food is too poor, or that they have not sufficient liberty to go here and go there; in a word, gentlemen, if there are some still slaves of nature, fettered by the pleasures of sense, like this miserable wretch now speaking, who, at the age of seventy, is still worldly—if there are any such, let them be convinced that they are unworthy labourers in the vineyard of our Lord.

"But, gentlemen, what have they suffered in Poland? Famine, pestilence even twice, and war. God is proving them by every trial. And we are to be here like cowards without courage or zeal, to see others expose themselves to danger in the service of God, and we remain weak and cowardly! Oh, what misery, what wretchedness! Let us take a resolution, then, of consuming our strength in God's service. Do you not desire it, my dear seminarists, brothers and students? I shall not ask the priests, for, of course, they are all so disposed. Yes, my God, we wish to correspond to the designs you have upon us. I know not, gentlemen, how I have said all this to you; I did not intend it; but I was so moved by what has been said, and, at the same time, so consoled at the graces which God has bestowed on our priests in Poland, that I wished your hearts should share the sentiments which fill my own."

Another day he said: "Happy, indeed, are our confrères in Poland, who have suffered so much during the recent wars and the pestilence, and who are suffering

still, in order to bring comfort and consolation to the poor! Happy missioners, whom neither shot nor shell, bayonet nor plague, has been able to drive out of Warsaw, where the sufferings of others detain them. They have persevered, and are doing so still, amid so many dangers and sufferings, and all that through the spirit of mercy and charity. Oh, how happy they are to employ so usefully this moment of life! Yes, this moment, for life is but a moment that passes like smoke. Alas! near eighty years have I lived, and those years seem now as a moment, as a dream, and nothing remains but remorse for lost time." If that is not eloquence, where would it be? If that is not humility, forgetfulness and contempt of self, zeal and self-sacrifice, where shall we find them?

The political aspect of the time was turning Saint Vincent's thoughts to the subject which was then occupying the minds of all great men—a fear that the Catholic faith was being lost to Europe. "No doubt, gentlemen," Saint Vincent would say, "the Son of God promised that He would be with His Church till the end of time. But He has not promised that His Church would be in France or in Spain. He has undoubtedly said that He would not abandon His Church, and that she should remain till the consummation of the world, in some place or other, but He does not say where. If there was one country more than another which might seem to have a prior claim, it was the Holy Land, where He was born, began His Church, and worked so many miracles. Notwithstanding, it was from this chosen land that He took His Church to give it to the Gentiles. Oh! What joy it should be to God if, amid the ruin of His Church by the upheaval of heretics, and the licentiousness of concupiscence, some persons should be found offering themselves to plant

elsewhere, if we must so speak, the remnant of His Church, and others to defend and guard the little that remains. O Saviour! What a joy to you to see such faithful servants and guardians of what remains to you still! O gentlemen! What a reason to rejoice! Conquerors leave a part of their troops behind to guard what they have, and send others forward to extend their empire. So ought it to be with us. We ought here to bravely hold and preserve the interests of Jesus Christ and His Church, and at the same time to constantly labour to make known His name and His Church in far-distant lands."

Sustained by such a man and such a saint, nothing was able to daunt the Priests of the Mission in this hour of Poland's trial. They founded seminaries, missions, parishes, hospitals, and thus aided this afflicted nation to traverse the most frightful persecution any people could know, and to preserve the faith.

The entrance of the Priests of the Mission into Italy was not accompanied by such trials; for now in a Catholic country, like all who came to work for religion, they were greeted with joy. They soon settled at Rome, Turin, Genoa, and Viterbo, giving missions with extraordinary success, establishing the Tuesday Conferences, and directing spiritual retreats. The Pope wished that they should prepare the students for ordination. In fine, everywhere they spread an odour of sanctity, so much so that the Pope many times publicly expressed his satisfaction.

But extensive as were these missions, embracing Europe and a part of Africa, they were not enough to satiate the zeal of Saint Vincent de Paul. He yearned to evangelise the world. According as he saw the West losing the faith, he desired to propagate it in the East.

"I assure you," he wrote to Father d'Horgny at Rome, "that I feel a great longing to spread the Church in infidel countries, for it seems to me that God is by degrees withdrawing it from here, and that in a hundred years or so the Church shall barely exist in these countries. Our depraved morals and those ever-increasing new doctrines are the cause of this. By such heresies the Church has lost within the last hundred years most of the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, England, Scotland, Bohemia and Hungary. Italy, France, Spain, Ireland and Poland are all that remain, and even of them France and Poland are tainted with the heresy of other countries. Now, if the Church has lost so much in a hundred years, there is reason to fear that in another hundred all Europe shall have been lost, and hence I esteem those happy who are enabled to extend the kingdom of Christ elsewhere." Again he writes: "Have we not reason to fear that God will deliver Europe into the hands of the heretics, who are attacking the Church and doing such damage that only a small portion of her remains intact. To add to the misfortune, what remains seems likely to be divided in consequence of these new opinions that are springing up every day. What shall become of us if God should transfer His Church to the infidels, who perhaps live more morally than the majority of Christians, who have nothing less at heart than the mysteries of our holy religion? For myself, I must say those have been my sentiments for some time past."

Everywhere he sought apostles. He wished to see them labouring in Persia, Egypt and the Indies. He deplored that the Congregation was still too few in numbers to afford missioners to fill the East. In the meanwhile, at the suggestion of the Pope, he hastened to send a contingent of his priests to Madagascar. In

this large island, 450 leagues long and 160 wide, there were between four and five thousand savages scantily clad and living in awful degradation. Besides, the island was so unhealthy that for a long time it was known as the White Man's Grave. Saint Vincent chose for this mission many of his most eminent priests. To begin with Father Nacquart, "he was eaten up with a desire for the foreign mission," and with him the saint sent Father Gondrée, one of his best missioners, humble, charitable, affable, exact and zealous, "for whom I cannot adequately express my esteem." Then there were Fathers Bourdaise, Dufour, Prévost and de Belleville, all of the highest virtue, and most experienced in the functions of their vocation. All these spent their lives in extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ in Madagascar.

The letter in which Saint Vincent makes known his appointment to Father Nacquart, the leader of this first band of missioners, is extremely beautiful. "It is now a long time since God first inspired you with the holy desire of rendering Him some signal service. When it was proposed at Richelieu that missioners should be sent to the idolaters, it seems to me that our Lord inspired you with this vocation, as you, together with some others of the community there, wrote to that effect. It is time that the seed should bear its fruit. The Nuncio, by the authority of the Propaganda, of which the Pope is the head, has chosen our Congregation to serve God in Madagascar. We have selected you as the most acceptable oblation which we could offer to our Creator, to render Him service in Madagascar with another good priest of ours. O my dearest confrère! What sentiments fill your heart at this news? Is it not confusion at receiving such a grace from heaven—a vocation as high

and as admirable as that of the great apostles and saints of the Church — the eternal designs of God accomplished in you in time? Humility alone is capable of supporting such a favour. In gratitude for such a grace you should abandon yourself, all you have, and all you are, with unbounded confidence, into the arms of your Creator. You have need of great generosity and invincible courage. Your faith should be like Abraham's, and your charity like Saint Paul's. Zeal, patience, humility, poverty, retirement, discretion, integrity of life, and an ardent desire to consume yourself in the service of God, all these are as requisite for you as for the great Saint Francis Xavier."

The saint then goes into detail concerning the virtues which are necessary: faith and purity, which have a particularly good effect on those poor people, though they themselves are so viciously inclined; devotedness to the Catholic Church and respect for her teachings. He concludes with these words: "You shall be subject to us, but possess full powers from the Nuncio, who has this work very much at heart. I am with you in spirit, and would be in person but for my unworthiness. At least, I shall pray every day that God may spare me for you, and in His mercy grant that I may see you again in heaven and honour you among the apostles. I shall conclude, prostrate in spirit at your feet, and begging of you to implore our common Lord that I may be faithful unto the end, and finish in His love the course which leads to life eternal." The saint adds in a postscript: "What more can I say except to pray to God to bestow upon you a share of His charity as He has done of His patience. I only wish that, were it lawful, I should go to be your companion instead of Father Gondrée."

The voyage was long and dangerous, and they ex-

perienced two terrible storms. But what were even these dangers to the frightful fatigues which awaited the heroic missioners in Madagascar. Father Gondrée was the first to succumb. After baptizing six hundred, and leaving behind him the perfume of his piety, sweetness and devotedness, he died in peace and tranquillity. Father Nacquart thus writes of him to Saint Vincent :—

"About Rogation time, M. Flacourt, the Governor, was about to make a journey of some leagues, and desired to be accompanied by one of us. Father Gondrée set out, and suffered much, not only from the excessive heat, but also from scanty food, only taking a little rice and water, in order not to break the abstinence. This so weakened him that he returned with a fever and great pains in his joints. He bore all these sufferings, however, with the greatest fortitude and most Christian spirit.

"As his malady continued to get worse and worse, I administered to him the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, which he received with the most tender devotion. His only regret was having to leave the poor infidels. He urged our countrymen here to have a great fear of the judgments of God and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he himself was particularly attached. He desired me to write to you, sir, and to thank you most humbly, in his name, for the favour you did him in admitting him into the Congregation, and especially in choosing him, before so many others more worthy, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this island. He also wishes that our confrères should give thanks to God on his behalf. On two occasions he warned me to be prepared to suffer great things here for Jesus Christ. Then having spent a part of the night in making continual aspirations to God, he died peacefully only fourteen days after his illness began. He was interred the next day,

amid the tears of our countrymen, and even of a great number of the poor infidels, who said that they had never met till our arrival any missioners who were not violent and vicious, and who taught them heavenly doctrine with such affection and sweetness as the deceased.

"You may well imagine how my poor heart feels at the loss of him, whom I loved as myself, and who, after God, was my only consolation here. I asked our Lord to give me a part of the virtues of the deceased, that I might be enabled to do the work of two. Since his death I have felt the effect of his prayers, and a double strength of mind and body enables me to labour for the conversion of these poor infidels and for the advancement of God's glory in this country."

On learning of Father Gondrée's death, Saint Vincent hastened to send new missioners to aid Father Nacquart, now left alone to groan under the burden. But, alas! when they arrived it was only to find him whom they fondly hoped to work under, in his grave. "O sir!" wrote Father Bourdaise, "words fail me to adequately express the sorrow of my poor heart. God only knows our sighs and our tears when on our arrival we found Father Nacquart dead, he who was to be to us another Joseph to receive us as his brethren, another Moses to lead us into this desert." Then the missioner adds: "Shortly afterwards the loss of Father Mousnier, whose zeal consumed him in less than six months, was more than I could bear without support." This ungrateful soil devoured all its labourers. "Father de Belleville died *en route*. Father Prévost, after surviving the dangers of the voyage, died on his arrival. Father Dufour only lived long enough to show his loss. In fact, all your children that have been sent here, are now passed away. I alone am left to tell the tale." Notwithstanding all

this, Father Bourdaise begged Saint Vincent not to lose courage. "If," he says, "we had only two or three priests, I believe the whole island should be baptized within a year." Our saint did not stand in need of encouragement. "That man of God, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, knew full well that all these adversities were but proofs of God's providence, trials of His love. Hence bracing himself up under the blow that might have proved fatal to a heart less courageous than his, he resolved to continue, with the aid of grace, his only hope and strength, the work which he had so well begun. He said: 'The Church was established by the death of the Son of God, strengthened by that of the apostles, popes and martyred bishops. Her children were multiplied by persecution, and the blood of martyrs was the seed of the Church. God usually tries His chosen servants. His goodness makes it clear that He wishes now as ever to establish the kingdom of His Son in all nations. It is evident that these people were disposed to receive the light of the Gospel, when six hundred of them were baptized by a single priest, and it would therefore be against all reason and charity to refuse this missioner's request for aid, and to withhold the instruction which is all those poor people ask.'

"These and similar considerations made him resolve to send towards the end of the year 1659 four priests and a lay-brother, who, despising danger and death, had urged him to allow them to go and labour in this difficult mission."[1] These five missioners left France, but Providence wished that they should be forced to return to Paris in eighteen months. Their vessel was wrecked off the Cape of Good Hope, but fortunately all were saved.

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 447.

"Saint Vincent was dead when the news of this last accident arrived, which certainly would have afflicted him beyond measure. Thus of the twenty who at different periods had embarked for Madagascar and endeavoured to establish there the empire of Jesus Christ, seven had died, including Father Bourdaise, and the remainder obliged to return by the hidden and inscrutable designs of Providence."[1]

In sending his missioners to Madagascar, Saint Vincent had placed them on the route to America, the Indies, China and Japan. Now in his eighty-fifth year, he was no longer able to leave his arm-chair, but his great heart and mind traversed those far-off regions which he longed to evangelise. We know that he constantly was thinking of sending missioners to Persia, Egypt and Brazil. He even thought of China, as we see from the letter of a missioner who four years after our saint's death asked leave to go there. "If you obtain this permission, after Madagascar I shall go on to China, Japan and other infidel countries, in order to open the way for our Congregation to labour there as it does in Europe. It was also the intention of our blessed Father that I should pass into China." Almost all these missions have since been realised; but Saint Vincent sees them from his throne in heaven.

[1] Abelly, vol. i. p. 451.

CHAPTER III

SPREAD OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY—SAINT VINCENT GIVES THEM RULES

1655

THE spread of the Sisters of Charity had not been as rapid as that of the Priests of the Mission. If we except Poland, where a house was founded at Warsaw in 1652, the sisters had not gone outside of France. Even there they had only fifty houses, but they were asked for on all sides, and the numerous letters from bishops which crowded in upon Saint Vincent plainly showed that the hour for their extension had arrived. Let us see the progress which they had already made.

Founded in 1633 to aid the Ladies of Charity, they gradually rose from that secondary position by reason of their humility, modesty and devotedness; and without desiring it, or even realising it, they imperceptibly effaced the Ladies of Charity. In the same manner they entered the hospitals; at first that of Angiers, "where it was felt that a special blessing seemed to attend their services towards the sick." This explains the importunity of the Bishop of Angiers to have them in a second hospital. Saint Vincent, notwithstanding their fewness, could not refuse him. Soon, despite all resistance, it was necessary to provide them for hospitals at Nantes, La Fère, Cahors and Metz, where the Queen was anxious "that they should exhibit the holiness of the Catholic religion to the numerous heretics and Jews there." They were also placed

in hospitals at Ussel, Narbonne, Sainte-Menehould, and finally, in five or six hospitals in Paris, where they increased as if by magic, to the great consolation of both doctors and invalids.

To pass from the ordinary hospitals to those for the galleys only required a little more devotedness, and that was not wanting to the Sister of Charity. But here, too, the initiative was not taken by themselves. It came from the Ladies of Charity, who soon felt that though their visits, accompanied by the distribution of money and food, were a consolation and even a benefit to the galleys, yet they were not enough. To induce these unfortunate creatures to suffer patiently, to cease blaspheming God and man, the tender care and devotedness of the Sisters of Charity could alone suffice. They spoke to Saint Vincent, who had a predilection for the galleys, and to see them entrusted to the Sisters in Paris, Marseilles, Toulon and Algiers, afforded him a joy which he could not conceal.

At the same time, and by the same force of circumstances, the foundlings gradually fell more and more into the hands of the Sisters of Charity. After the second great crisis, which we have related, it became evident that if the Sisters did not take entire control the work would soon collapse. For the moment they hesitated, for Mlle. le Gras felt the burden too heavy; and moreover, where was she to procure the necessary funds? When, however, the great Foundling Hospital was established she hesitated no longer, and the Sisters of Charity brought to the work of the foundlings that tender devotedness which has characterised them ever since.

Thus it was that each year brought new works for the Sisters of Charity. After the foundlings came the elementary schools. We have seen that they undertook

this labour in 1641, and they have never since relinquished it. It was a work of predilection with Margaret Nazeau, the first Sister of Charity. To teach the young to speak and write, to enable them to gain their livelihood, and while doing that, at the same time to rear them in piety, purity and faith—"nothing," said Saint Vincent, "is more worthy of a Sister of Charity. O sisters! you ought to instruct yourselves, in order to be able to teach the little children. In this you ought to be very careful, since it is one of the designs you should have in consecrating yourselves to God."

We must not forget, too, a service which the Sisters of Charity were beginning to render to society, a rare and most beautiful example of devotedness—their heroic services on the battlefield. During the great wars they had showed themselves valiant workers, and they could no longer be done without. Petitions for them came in from all sides. "O sisters!" said Saint Vincent, "behold the Queen requests that you should go to Calais to take charge of the wounded soldiers. How you should humble yourselves, seeing that God deigns to make use of you for such great ends. Men go to war to kill one another, and you, sisters, you go to repair the evils which they have done. Oh, what a blessing! Men kill the body, and very often the soul, and you, you go to restore life, or at least by your care to assist in preserving it. To have courage to go among soldiers, to visit the wounded, not only in France, but even in Poland, ah! where can we find a parallel? Was such a thing ever heard of before? For my part, I must say that I know of no society that has done what God does through yours."

Of the four sisters whom Saint Vincent had sent to Calais two quickly succumbed. "I recommend to your

prayers," says the saint, "the Sisters of Charity who were sent to Calais to assist the wounded soldiers. Two of them, although they were the strongest, have died. Think, gentlemen, of these four good sisters among five or six hundred wounded soldiers, and admire therein the goodness of Divine Providence in raising up such a company to meet the wants of our time. The Queen has done us the honour of writing to ask for others to be sent. Now four are going to start. One of them, aged about fifty, came to me last Friday at the Hôtel-Dieu, saying that she had learned that two of our sisters had died while tending the wounded, and that she was ready to be sent if I thought well of it. I replied that I would think the matter over. Yesterday she returned to receive my reply. See, gentlemen and my brothers, the courage of these sisters to expose their lives, as victims, for the love of Jesus Christ and their neighbour. Is it not truly admirable? All I can say is that these sisters will be our judges, if we are not ready like them to expose our lives for love of God." Such splendid fruits and unforeseen success rejoiced the heart of Saint Vincent, who attributed all to God.

It is not surprising, then, that the Sisters of Charity were asked for on all sides. "You would hardly believe," writes Saint Vincent, "how God blesses these good sisters everywhere. One bishop has asked to have them for three hospitals, another for two, and a third is also urging me to send them to his diocese." In another letter the saint goes into greater detail. "The Bishop of Saint-Malo is extremely desirous of employing the sisters in his city, but at present this cannot be done, as Mlle. le Gras has none to spare. It is the same with the Bishops of Cahors, Toulouse, Angiers and many other places."

Soon France, even Europe, was not sufficient for

their zeal. "The name of the Sister of Charity has spread almost everywhere. It is known in Madagascar, where they are urgently requested, and our missioners who are there, write to say that they yearn to see them co-operating in saving those poor souls." The start was given. "Most of our sisters," says Saint Vincent, "do not wish to hear of any setting out for Madagascar without them;" and looking to the future, the saint remarked "that the day would come when they should be sent to Africa and the Indies."

Thus the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul were taking up their positions at the different posts assigned to them by Divine Providence, in view of the revolutions and catastrophes of modern times. Thus they were beginning to exhibit those marvellous qualities which have won for them the reputation of being heroines of charity, as well in war as in peace.

So far, however, they had not written rules. Saint Vincent was now in his seventy-ninth year, and everybody feared that he should die without giving the sisters their formal constitution. Mlle. le Gras was in feverish disquietude each time Saint Vincent fell ill. "I always notice a little of the human spirit in you," writes the saint, "for you think that all is lost when you see me unwell. O woman of little faith! Why have you not more confidence and acquiescence in the example of Jesus Christ? The Saviour of the world resigned Himself to the will of His Father for the welfare of His Church; and you, for a handful of sisters whom God has raised up, you think He will be wanting to you! Go, mademoiselle, humble yourself profoundly before God."

But if Saint Vincent did not hurry to put the rules in writing, he was, nevertheless, constantly thinking of

it. He was slowly maturing in his mind every detail. Already he had determined upon and actually put into execution one of the most essential points. But there were others, especially two very delicate rules, not yet decided. The first was: To whom should the entire government of the Sisters of Charity be confided? Should it be to his successor, the Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission, which seemed very natural, seeing that the two Companies had the same spirit? Or should it be to a Superior named by the Archbishop of Paris, as is the custom with the Carmelites, the Nuns of the Visitation and many other orders? Urged by humility and a spirit of entire obedience to the bishops, Saint Vincent adopted the second plan, and in 1646 petitioned the Archbishop of Paris to erect the Sisters of Charity into a society, under the direction of a priest named by him. Cardinal de Retz, who was the Archbishop of Paris, cordially received this request, and named the saint Superior-General of the sisters during his life. On the saint's death, the Archbishop reserved to himself the right of naming another. The next step was to have the deed registered by Parliament in the ordinary way, and the King was ready to give the letters-patent. But it was then that a singular event took place, in which some have seen, and not indeed without reason, the finger of God. The deed, signed and countersigned by M. de Méliaud, parliamentary secretary, was lost, and was sought for many years, but in vain. It was necessary, then, to prepare another, which was not ready till eight years afterwards, 1655. Mlle. le Gras, who could not bear to think that a day should come when her daughters should no longer be governed by the successor of her venerated father, profited by this long interval to induce Saint Vincent to change his mind.

Why separate two institutes which had the same founder, the same end, and which ought to have the same spirit? At least, might not the Archbishop select one of the priests of the Congregation of the Mission as Superior. If it were otherwise, was it not to be feared that among those selected to govern some might be found who, not having their spirit, should lead them astray and ulti mately cause their ruin? This is what Mlle. le Gras wrote to Saint Vincent in 1646, what she repeated to him again and again in 1647 and 1651, and finally, what she placed before him in a detailed account, to which she added so humble and ardent a supplication that Saint Vincent yielded to her wishes. Thus he again petitioned the Archbishop of Paris, but this time asked that the Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission should always be the Superior-General of the Sisters of Charity. Cardinal de Retz graciously consented to this on Jan. 18, 1655. "Inasmuch as," says our saint's former pupil, "God has blessed the care and labours which our well-beloved Vincent de Paul has expended for the success of this pious design, we once more by these presents confide and commit to him the government and direction of the said society of Sisters of Charity during his life, and after his death to his successors, the Superiors-General of the said Congregation of the Mission." This deed was approved and confirmed, first by the King, and afterwards by the Pope.

Now that this first difficulty was removed—and thanks to Mlle. le Gras—in a manner that two centuries have proved the wisdom of, it was necessary to solve a second problem. Under the Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission, the Sisters of Charity further required a Mother-General, who should direct

from Paris the houses of the sisters spread all over the world. Where was this Mother-General to be taken from? Was it to be from the Sisters of Charity themselves? But they had been created as auxiliaries of the Ladies of Charity, to do the work which the latter were unwilling to undertake. Now, among these young girls could one be found capable of directing the others? Was it then to be from the Ladies of Charity that a Mother-General should come? These ladies had every qualification—intelligence, experience, devotedness, and grand connections which would insure high patronage. That was all very well. But was it likely that these grand ladies, almost all married, with children and a large household to look after, would be able to govern a society that was increasing every day? And even if they had time, would they possess that spirit of poverty, simplicity and mortification which ought to be impressed upon the minds of the sisters? For all these reasons Saint Vincent decided that the Mother-General should be taken from the Sisters of Charity themselves. Besides, from the time of their first formation the character of these young girls had changed very much. A large number of distinguished ladies had joined, and some of the leaders of fashion were heard to regret on their death-bed that they had not worn the humble habit of a Sister of Charity.

Here, then, was to be the mode of life of the Sisters of Charity, and which for ten years they had practised: they were not to be religious in the strict sense—not to make perpetual vows, but only for one year; they were to use the secular dress, and not to have special chaplains or confessors. Such were their rules, and all that remained was to put them in writing. This, Saint Vincent, now in his seventy-ninth year, and full of wisdom, ex-

perience and virtue, did in the course of the year 1655. When he had completed them he wished to afford the sisters the pleasure of a solemn distribution, and with that in view, assembled, on May 30, 1655, all those who were then in Paris or its vicinity. He addressed them almost in these words: "My dear sisters, it would seem that by uniting you, Providence wishes that you should honour the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. Oh, how advantageous to live in community! for each member participates in the welfare of the whole body, and thus receives more abundant graces. Although living in common up to the present, you have not received your rule of life. In that Divine Providence has acted towards you as He did towards His people, whom He left without the law for more than a thousand years. Our Saviour did the same when founding His Church; for as long as He was on earth there was no written law, and it was the Apostles who, after His departure, collected His teachings.

"Now it is important that I should give you a rule before I go. Some one perhaps has said that as long as I remain there is no necessity for a rule. My dear sisters, that is not the way with the works of God. You should have, indeed, a poor support in a wretched creature. Your strength ought to be in Providence, who has made you what you are.

"Hitherto you have not formed a distinct and separate body from the Ladies of Charity. But now, sisters, God wishes you to form a particular body, which, without being entirely separated from the Ladies of Charity, shall have, nevertheless, its own peculiar exercises and functions. God wishes to bind you more strictly by the approbation which He has permitted his Grace the Archbishop of Paris to give to your rules and manner of life."

(The saint then read the text of the petition and its approbation.)

"The first article of your rules says that your Company shall be composed of widows and young girls, who shall elect one from among themselves to be Superioress for a term of three years; that this Superioress can be re-elected for a second term of three years, but no longer. This is with the understanding that it is not to take place till after the death of Mlle. le Gras." Here Mlle. le Gras fell on her knees and begged Saint Vincent that it should take place immediately. "Your sisters and I," replied Saint Vincent, "should pray to God to preserve your life for many years to come. He generally preserves by extraordinary means those who are necessary for the accomplishment of His works; and if you advert to it, for ten years it may be said that the preservation of your life, mademoiselle, has been almost a miracle."

Then he continued: "You shall be known as the Sisters of Charity, servants of the sick poor. Oh, what a beautiful title! It is as much as to call you servants of Jesus Christ, since He considers as done to Himself whatever is done to His members. Besides, He never did anything else but serve the poor.

"It was our wish that it should be said of you what was said of our Lord, that He began to do and then to teach. What you have just heard, is it not what has been practised among you for twenty-five years? Is there anything in it which you have not done? No, through the mercy of God you have acted thus before being commanded, at least in express terms; for the late Pope advised this, but now you do so because it is enjoined upon you.

"I told you on a previous occasion, sisters, that

whoever embarks on a long voyage should be acquainted with the rules of navigation, which should be strictly observed, otherwise he is in danger of being lost. It is the same way with persons who are called by God to live in community; they run a great risk of being lost if they do not observe their rules. By the mercy of God, I believe that there is not one among you who is not in the disposition to practise them faithfully. Is that not so?"—"Yes, Father."

"When Moses gave the Law to the people of Israel, they received it on their knees as you are now. I sincerely hope through the infinite mercy of God that He will second your desires and grant you the grace to do His will. Sisters, do you not give yourselves to Him with your whole hearts to live in the observance of the rules which He has granted you?"—"Yes, Father."

"Do you desire to live and die in the observance of them?"—"Yes, Father."

"I beg God in His sovereign goodness and mercy to shed abundantly every grace and blessing on you, that you may perfectly accomplish His holy will by the practice of your rules. I beg of the Blessed Virgin to ask her dear Son to give you the graces necessary for this. Most Holy Virgin, we beseech you to assist this Company. Continue and perfect this work, which is the greatest in the world. Intercede for these here present, and for those that are absent. And O my God! I beg of you to grant us grace through the merits of Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Here several of the sisters asked pardon for the faults which they had committed against the rules; after which the saint added: "I beg of God with all my heart, that He will pardon you all your faults. And I, wretch that I am, who do not keep my own rules, I beg pardon

of Him, and of you also, sisters. How many faults have I not committed in your regard, and in that which concerns your work! I beg you to implore God's mercy for me. On account of my unworthiness I will implore our Lord to give you His blessing Himself, and I will not pronounce the words to-day."

Here Saint Vincent kissed the floor; and Mlle. le Gras and all the sisters, greatly distressed that their Father should refuse to give them his blessing, entreated him with so much earnestness that at last he granted their request. "Pray to God, then, sisters, that He will not regard my unworthiness, nor the sins of which I am guilty, but that He will show mercy to me; and now, may He shed His blessing upon you while at the same time I pronounce the words, *Benedictio Dei Patris*," &c.

Thus terminated that memorable conference in which shone the kindliness, the simplicity and humility of the Father, the self-sacrifice and holy zeal of the Sisters of Charity, and which was as the launching of a mighty ship destined to sail on every sea.

Two months afterwards, August 8, 1655, another assembly was held, composed of all the sisters then in Paris, with the object of electing persons to fill the responsible offices of the community. Although, according to the rules, the election should follow the plurality of votes, yet the occasion was so important that Saint Vincent determined to name the sisters himself. Julienne Loret was appointed First Assistant; Mathurine Guérin, Treasurer; and Jeanne Gressier, Bursar. These nominations were written on parchment, and Mlle. le Gras, together with the sisters, signed it. Saint Vincent placed his name at the end of the document, and sealed it with the seal of the Congregation of the Mission, which represents Jesus Christ with His arms

extended as if ready to receive all who came to Him. This precious document is still to be seen in the Archives Nationales in Paris.

Now that all this was accomplished, it would seem that Saint Vincent had, at least in this quarter, finished his work. He had made Mlle. le Gras Mother-General of the Sisters of Charity, and had given them as their spiritual director Father Portail, his first, his dearest and mostly saintly disciple. He therefore felt that he might rest assured as to the future. But how was he to leave his dear Sisters of Charity? Neither his eighty years nor the multiplicity of his affairs, his enormous correspondence nor his tottering limbs, were sufficient to prevent him from going to see them. When eighty-four it was necessary to lead him to his arm-chair, but once there he forgot his age and infirmities, and so bright was his spirit that in his familiar and charming simplicity was an eloquence that went straight to the heart. Like an artist who touches and retouches his work to complete its finish, so Saint Vincent came every Wednesday to explain to his dear sisters the rules which he had given them. "To-day, my dear sisters, I will begin the explanation of your common rules. They are so called because all the Sisters of Charity must observe them in whatsoever place or office they may be, not only in Paris, but also in the country, in the parishes, the hospitals, among the galley-slaves, the insane, the foundlings—in fine, everywhere." What a beautiful list—charity adapting itself to every misery, and as universal as misery itself.

The saint explains how all these works had their origin, and how God recompensed the devotedness of the sisters by entrusting them to them. "You, sisters, have given yourselves to God to assist the sick poor, not

in one house only, as is done by the Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu, but everywhere, as our Lord did without exception, for He assisted all those who had recourse to Him. God, seeing this, has said, 'These sisters please Me, they have acquitted themselves well of this employment; I will give them a second, which is to take charge of abandoned children, who have no one to take care of them.' Seeing that you have embraced this second employment with such charity, He says, 'I will give them still another.' Now, what is this other? It is the assistance of the poor galley-slaves. O sisters! what a happiness to serve them who are abandoned to those who have no pity on them. I have seen these poor victims treated like beasts. Then, again, God has confided to your care the insane. We must honour in them the wisdom of a God who wished to be treated as a fool. We know not whether we shall live long enough to see any new employments given to the Company, but assuredly God will give them if you act uprightly, as I hope you will."

Thus as a recompense for their self-sacrifice towards the poor, the sick, the galley-slaves and the insane, the saint hopes that God may deign to use them to soothe miseries, if possible, still more appalling. Surely this is divine!

But to acquit themselves worthily of such functions it was necessary that the Sister of Charity should love and esteem her rules more than anything else. "It is these rules that ought to guide you more than any others, however good, or even better, in appearance. Would it be praiseworthy to see a bishop act as a Carthusian? Undoubtedly not, for then he would not act as God wishes. It would be the same with you, if, for example, you desired to follow the maxims of the Carmelites, while your spirit is to work for the neighbour.

"The blessed Bishop of Geneva said to me one day: 'Sir, I told our sisters to believe that all other orders were better than theirs, but, at the same time, to love their own rules more than any others. I desire even that they should believe their rules holier and better for them;' and then he gave me this illustration: 'Just as a child thinks his own mother more beautiful than any other, and though she may be deformed, yet loves her more than a queen, so our sisters should love their community more than all the others.'"

These rules, which he regarded as so important, Saint Vincent explained down to the least detail, and although only thirty-four have been transmitted to us, yet in the last years of his life he gave near two hundred conferences on them, dwelling upon each point more emphatically than ever.

Fearing for the sisters because of the praises which would certainly be evoked by their charity and devotedness—the more dangerous on that account—he sought to humble them more and more. There was to be no distinction; all were to be equal. It was his wish that there should be no Superioress in the houses; the very name was enough to frighten him. "Superioress! of whom or of what?" said he. "If it is necessary to have one, it should be to give an example of virtue and humility, to be the first to do everything, the first to cast herself at the feet of the sisters, the first to apologise, and the first to surrender her own opinion for that of another." Together with humility, he urged again and again the holy virtue of poverty. They were to be poor in their dress, all the more so because of their lowliness. Some sisters returning from Angiers and Nantes complained that they were ridiculed because of their head-dress, and asked that they might adopt that of the locality. "It

comes to this," replied Saint Vincent, "that they will have as many different hats or bonnets as there are cities and countries. Now, sisters, we see strangers here dressed according to their own fashion; and do they think of changing their costume because they are looked at and remarked? Before we became accustomed to the Capuchins, did we not find them so strange that we knew not what to compare them to? But did they change their dress? Certainly not. We have also seen persons from Poland dressed according to the custom of their country, and nobody wondered that they did not adopt the French costume. Hence you must not be astonished if people wish you to change and adapt your costume to that of the places to which you shall be sent. But under no pretext should you do so." Poverty was always to be practised in their food, even in time of sickness. "Sisters of Charity cease to be such if, when ill, they wish to be treated delicately. What they give to the poor, their lords and masters, is what they should expect. If they desire better, it would be to ask for what is above their state and what belongs only to ladies of the world. Because the Company makes a vow of poverty, its members ought to be treated accordingly.

"After that, what more can I say? With what do you think they nourish kings when they are sick? Eggs and soup; that is what they give them. God granted me the favour of assisting at the death of the late King. The doctor begged him to take some nourishment, but he refused on account of the repugnance he felt and because he saw that death was fast approaching. Calling me, he said, 'M. Vincent, the doctor wishes me to take some nourishment, which I have refused, since I am dying. What do you say?'—'Sire,' I replied, 'the doctors have advised you to take food, because it is a maxim among

them always to make the sick take something, as long as there remains a breath of life, hoping always for a favourable change ; therefore, sire, it will be better to do as the doctor directs.' This good King immediately submitted, and called for some soup. So that, sisters, if you have eggs and soup you are treated in the same manner as the greatest people on earth."

With humility and poverty, to which the saint constantly returned, he insisted especially on the peace, union and cordiality which ought to reign among the sisters. A house without these virtues is a hell. It is true, no doubt, that to have this union, sacrifices must be made, and faults and failings patiently borne. But which of us has not faults ? And would it be reasonable to expect others to bear with us if we are not willing to bear with them ? "This is what I often recommend to our missioners, and I recommend it also to you, sisters. There is no one who does not need forbearance and support, and indeed we must beg others to overlook our drawbacks. I often ask the missioners to bear with me, for there is no one who has greater need of support than I." (The saint said this with such humility and confusion that all were astonished.) "I sometimes wonder how they can bear with my disposition, my impatience and my other defects ; and I often beg of them to put up with me and not to mind my miseries."

In addition to humility, poverty and union among themselves, the saint constantly recommended a sweet unrestraint, a modest liberty. This he desired to establish at any cost. "You, sisters, frequently go into the world ; you treat with all classes of persons ; do so with simplicity, candour, with an upright intention and a pure heart." If Saint Vincent did not wish that his daughters should be religious, as he constantly said, he

wished that they should be even holier than religious, more hidden by their modesty, able to leave their houses to visit the sick, but more enclosed at home than a Carmelite in her cell.

Why did Saint Vincent labour so earnestly to fill the Sister of Charity's soul with that angelic purity, chaste liberty, that devotedness and detachment, that poverty and insensibility to all things worldly? For the sake of the poor; to serve them. "The poor are your masters and mine," he often repeated. "Oh, how beautiful is the soul of a Sister of Charity that is attached to the poor! It shall shine as the sun."

A thousand and a thousand times had Saint Vincent expressed these sentiments, but he continued to repeat them till his last breath. Like Saint John, in his old age unable to say any more than "Love one another," Saint Vincent, now in his eighty-fifth year, had these words always on his lips, "Love the poor, they are your masters and mine."

Those words produced their fruit. Hardly any one realises here below his ideal, but not so with Saint Vincent de Paul. There are few who have not met the Sisters of Charity and at once recognised in them the daughters of our saint. They have founded more than 2000 houses, and neither the effeminacy of the reign of Louis XIV., the horrors of the first republic, nor the wretched irreligion of the third, has been able to dim their splendour. From France they have passed to Italy, Poland, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and now to England and Scotland. They have traversed the Atlantic, and in the American Civil War their charity was rich alike for North and South. What Eastern land does not know them? At Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Damascus and Algiers, they are met in the streets; they

have penetrated into Persia, Abyssinia and China, and everywhere win respect and admiration, even from those who differ from them in religion.

Nothing has escaped their beneficent influence, for everywhere they went, they established crèches, hospitals, orphanages, schools and workshops. For every wound they found a balm, for every sorrow a consolation. Even a world that denies Jesus Christ and His Church, has been forced to recognise the sweet odour of their charity.

Neither time nor climate, customs nor manners, have been able to destroy the unity of that body, no more than human infirmity to weaken its spirit. After an interval of two centuries the Sister of Charity remains what Saint Vincent de Paul had made her. In a full meeting of the French Academy a bishop thus addressed an ex-Minister of Public Instruction: "When you return to Rome, sir, you will meet some of these indefatigable messengers of devotedness and consolation. Simple plebeians or illustrious patricians whom the most ancient families, *the Fabian* or *Sempronian gens*, would not have disowned, they are going to the distressed, to the wretched or the forgotten of this poor world, and toiling to bring to souls and society a better than an *Augustan* peace. They shall pass close to you, clothed in their rough habit, in the midst of the imposing ruins which repeat the history of ancient Rome from Romulus to Theodosius, and they shall remind you, sir, of those first disciples of the Gospel, whose traditions they continue. Your generous heart shall salute in them that charity which, in the name of a wisdom superior to the philosophy of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, is ready even for the greatest sacrifices; and borrowing from the Virgilian sibyl the cry of religious emotion, you shall join with us in saying, '*Ecce Deus, ecce Deus!*' God is there, God is there!"

CHAPTER IV

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL GIVES RULES TO THE PRIESTS OF THE MISSION

1658

WHILE Saint Vincent de Paul was solemnly giving rules to the Sisters of Charity, he was also endeavouring to obtain at Rome the approbation of the rules or constitutions of the Priests of the Mission. There was one point, however, which retarded everything: the unprecedented form in which he wished to establish his Congregation. He did not wish that his priests should be religious. At first he hesitated to require them to make vows; but afterwards he decided they should make simple vows, and not solemn which would constitute them a religious order. His priests were to retain the dominion of their property, but not the use, except with the permission of the Superior. They were to have the habit of secular priests, and only to be distinguished from them by their greater modesty and regularity. If Saint Vincent were asked why he was so determined that his followers should not be religious, he would have given, no doubt, good reasons; but the source is to be found in the divine inspiration which was then making itself felt throughout the Church. Adapting itself to altered circumstances, after creating in the Middle Ages such grand and holy religious orders, this divine afflatus was now about to meet the requirements of modern times with simple Congregations, no less holy, no less fervent and no less

fruitful. More exalted in sanctity than others, Saint Vincent felt before them this divine breath, which was only to be felt later on by all. At the time the older members of the Sacred College only saw in such a Congregation of priests an innovation, and therefore they refused to approve it. In vain did Father Berthe, who was sent to Rome for the purpose by Saint Vincent, endeavour to succeed. His successor, Father Jolly, should probably have also failed, had he not met in Rome Cardinal de Retz, who always remained devoted to his old tutor. The Cardinal took up the matter, and proposed it to the Pope himself.

The divine inspirations which saints feel by reason of their close union with God, are also felt by Popes, on account of their high position and authority. Alexander VII., by a brief, dated September 22, 1655, approved the fundamental principle of the constitutions drawn up by Saint Vincent de Paul, namely, that the Priests of the Mission should make simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but with this express condition, that these vows do not constitute them as a religious order : "*Atque dicta congregatio non censeatur propterea in numero ordinum religiosorum, sed sit de corpore cleri sæcularis.*"

Saint Vincent experienced deep joy on receiving this brief. He at once set about placing the finishing stroke on the rules and constitutions, which were so long expected, and which his advanced age rendered so necessary.

The brief was read in presence of the community of Saint-Lazare, and accepted by all with filial submission. Henceforth the difference of opinion about the new form of religious life ceased for ever, and the Priests of the Mission have always continued to make use of

the same formulary of vows as that used on the first occasion.[1]

It is under these circumstances that Saint Vincent de Paul put the finishing stroke on the rules or constitutions of his Congregation. He was now eighty-two years of age, of eminent sanctity and consummate experience. During thirty-three years these rules had been tried before being written. On all difficult points he had consulted successively Roman canonists, theologians of the Sorbonne, parliamentary lawyers, local superiors, and even the humblest of his priests, in order to find out from them what the law permitted and what experience showed to be practicable. With what prayer, what elevation of his soul to God, had he prepared himself for drawing up these rules! He reduced them to twelve chapters, all of which are filled with the love of God. When he had finished them he assembled the community to solemnly bequeath them to it.

"It was in the year 1658," says Abelly, "two years before his death, that Saint Vincent completed the rules of his Congregation. His great age and his almost constant infirmities made him feel that he had only a few years to live. Having loved his own during life, he wished to give them a signal proof of that love before his death, by leaving them his spirit expressed in their rules or constitutions."

On Friday, May 17, 1658, in presence of the community assembled in Saint-Lazare, Saint Vincent spoke as follows. Having explained in the first place why these

[1] "Ego N . . ., indignus sacerdos (aut clericus) Congregationis Missionis, coram beatissima Virgine et curia cælesti universa, voveo Deo paupertatem, castitatem, et Superiori nostro ejusque successoribus obedientiam, juxta instituti nostri regulas seu constitutiones. Voveo me præterea pauperum rusticanorum saluti toto vitæ tempore in dicta congregatione vacaturum, ejusdem Dei omnipotentis gratia adjuvante, quem ob hoc suppliciter invoco." —*Archives of the Mission.*

rules were delayed, and that there was no cause of regret on that account, he continued: "If we had given rules at the very beginning, before the Congregation had acquired any experience, such a manner of acting might appear more the work of man than of Divine Providence. But all these rules, all that you now see in the Congregation, all this has been done, I know not how, for I never thought of it; all this has been introduced by degrees; no one being able to say who is the author of it. As for me, when I consider how God has given existence to our Congregation in His Church, I confess I am completely bewildered, and I seem to be in a dream. No, this is not of man, this is of God. Will you call that the work of man which the human understanding has not foreseen, nor the will desired nor sought in any way? Our first missioners thought no more of it than I; so that all this is beyond our hopes and expectations.

"And if you ask how these practices of the Congregation were introduced, I must answer, I know not, nor can I know. There is Father Portail, who was with me from the beginning, and he can tell you that there was nothing further from our thoughts than all this. Everything came by degrees, one thing after another. The number of those who came to us increased, each one laboured for the acquisition of virtue, and good practices were imperceptibly established, that all might live in perfect union and act with uniformity amidst their various occupations. These are the practices that have always been observed, and by the grace of God are observed at present. It is thought expedient to reduce them to the form of rules, which I trust the Congregation will receive as coming from God."

Here the saint could not restrain his humility, and

continued: "O gentlemen and my brothers! I am amazed when I consider that it is I that am giving these rules, but they are the work of God. The more I think of it, the more I see that it is God alone who has inspired these rules. If I have contributed ever so little, I fear that little is but an obstacle to their exact observance and to the good they are calculated to produce. It seems to me that, by the grace of God, these rules tend to withdraw us from sin, to procure the salvation of souls, to serve the Church, and thus procure the greater glory of God. Whoever observes them properly will be free from vices and sins, useful to the Church, and will render to God the glory He demands. O Saviour! what a happiness! I cannot sufficiently realise it. Our rules prescribe a life common enough in appearance, but they are capable of raising to a high state of perfection those who practise them.

"Besides this first end, which is to seek our own perfection, there is a second, which ought to be very dear to us, for no other Congregation has ever had it, namely, to announce the Gospel to the poor country-people, to those who are most abandoned. Oh, what a subject of humiliation, that, as far as I know, there are no others who have this principal and peculiar end, to announce the Gospel to the most abandoned poor! *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* Our portion, then, gentlemen and my brothers, is the poor. What happiness to do that which our Saviour has come upon earth to do, and by this means to ascend from earth to heaven! To do this is to continue the work of the Son of God, who went into the rural districts to seek the poor. To aid the poor, our lords and masters; such are our rules. O blessed rules! which engage us to serve the rural districts to the exclusion of cities.

You see, then, that whatever the world may say, those shall be blessed who will observe these rules, because they shall render their actions and their lives conformable to the life and works of the Son of God."

He added: "I hope that the fidelity with which you have observed these rules in the past, and the patience you showed in waiting for them, will obtain for you, through the goodness of God, the grace to observe them still more easily and more perfectly in future. O Lord! bless this little book, and bestow upon it the unction of your Spirit, that it may produce in the souls of those who read it estrangement from sin, detachment from the world, the practice of virtue, and union with Thee."

Saint Vincent then proceeded to distribute to each a copy of the book of rules, beginning with the senior priests. He asked them to come towards him. "If I could, I would spare you the trouble by bringing the book to each one in his place; pardon my misery. Come, Father Portail, if you please; you have always supported my infirmities; may God bless you." He then gave the rules to Father Alméras and to Father Griguel, who were nearest to him, and begged the others to come for them in the order of seniority. To each Saint Vincent said a few words, always concluding with "May God bless you." Through respect the recipients kissed the book, the hand of Saint Vincent, and then, in a spirit of humility, the ground. The distribution ended, Father Alméras, in the name of the entire community, asked the saint's blessing. Then the aged saint, assisted by those nearest to him, knelt down and offered the following prayer: "O Lord, who art Thyself the eternal and immutable law, who by Thy infinite wisdom governest the universe; Thou from whom, as from a

living fountain, flow all laws that guide Thy creatures, and all rules of holy living; deign, O Lord, to bless those to whom Thou hast given these rules, and who have received them as from Thee. Give them, O Lord, grace to keep them faithfully unto death. It is in this confidence and in Thy name that, miserable sinner though I am, I shall pronounce a blessing on the Congregation: *Benedictio Domini nostri Jesu Christi descendat super vos et maneat semper. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*"

"Behold," says Abelly, "part of the discourse which Saint Vincent addressed to his community on this occasion. He spoke in a moderate tone of voice, humbly, sweetly and affectionately, making every heart reciprocate the love which glowed in his own. They felt like the Apostles listening to our Lord in His discourse at the last supper, when He gave them as their rule the commandment of perfect love."

Now that the rules were drawn up, Saint Vincent began to explain them. He did so every Wednesday to the Sisters of Charity, and every Friday to the Priests of the Mission. It was his last work, in which he poured out his whole heart, and for the last time manifested the grandeur of his faith, the depth of his humility, the fire of his charity, and the light of his wisdom crowned by experience. In December 1658 he explained the first chapter, which treats of the end of the Congregation of the Mission; and in the course of the year 1659 he spoke of the means to attain that end, and of the necessary virtues. He used the same simplicity, the same eloquent familiarity, though somewhat more incisive and tender, as when he spoke at the Tuesday Conferences. Two lay-brothers carried him to his arm-chair, and raised him when he wished to bless the community. As his

voice could not reach very far, and all were anxious not to lose a word, they sat in a semicircle around. He gave a magnificent conference on the end of the Congregation of the Mission, and concluded with those words: "I shall go from you soon. My age, my infirmities and the abominations of my life will not admit of God's enduring me on earth any longer. There may then come after my death dissatisfied and slothful persons who will say: 'Why embarrass ourselves with the care of hospitals? What means have we of assisting so many people ruined by the war, and of visiting them in their homes? Why direct the Sisters of Charity who serve the sick, and why waste our time with lunatics?' And others will say: 'It is too much to undertake to send missioners to distant countries, to the Indies, to Barbary and other foreign lands. We are willing to give missions in this country without going farther; but as for the foundlings, the aged and the prisoners, we want nothing to do with them.' Gentlemen and my brothers, before I leave you, I warn you, in the spirit in which Moses warned the children of Israel: I am going away, you will see me no more; I know that some among you will rise up to seduce others; they will do what I have forbidden, and will not do what I have commanded on the part of God. 'After my departure,' said Saint Paul, 'ravening wolves will come.' If this happens, say: 'Leave us under the laws of our fathers, in the state in which we are. God has placed us here, and He wishes us to remain here.' Hold firm, gentlemen and my brothers. But it will be said the Congregation is embarrassed with such an employment. Alas! if in its infancy it supported such burdens, why not do so now, when it is stronger. Leave us then in the state in which our Lord was while on earth. We are doing what He

did, and certainly no one shall be found to prevent us from imitating Him."

His conferences on the evangelical counsels and the holy vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were not less beautiful. This is how he speaks of poverty: "Poverty is the bond of religious orders. We are not, it is true, religious; we are not worthy to be such, though we live in common. But it is true, nevertheless, that poverty is the bond of communities, and particularly of ours. Yes, gentlemen, this virtue of poverty is the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission. The tongue that speaks to you has never, by the grace of God, asked anything of those things which the Congregation now possesses. And were it to establish the little Company in the provinces or in great cities, to increase its members or its employments, I would never, with God's help, utter a syllable or move an inch. Woe, woe, gentlemen—yes, woe, woe to the missioner who shall allow himself to be attracted by the perishable goods of this life! For he shall be ensnared; such thorns will remain embedded in him, and such ties continue to fetter him. And should this misfortune happen to the Congregation, what then will be said? and what sort of life will be led in it? Individuals will say: 'We have so many thousand francs income, let us then take our ease. Why go teach in the villages? Why labour so much? Let the poor country-people alone; their curés can attend to them if they wish. Let us live quietly without giving ourselves that trouble.' See how idleness will follow in the train of avarice; the only thought will be how to preserve and augment temporal goods—to gratify self. Then, indeed, may be said farewell to all the exercises of the Mission, and to the Congregation itself, for it will no longer exist. It is only necessary to

consult history to find innumerable examples of how riches and abundance of temporal possessions brought about the ruin, not only of many ecclesiastics, but even of entire orders and communities, because they had lost their primitive spirit of poverty."

And falling back on himself, in one of his usual outbursts of humility, he exclaimed: "O my Saviour! how can I, who am so miserable, speak thus?—I, who have had a horse, a carriage, and who at present have a fire in my room, a well-curtained bed, and a brother to wait on me; I, of whom such care is taken that I want for nothing. Oh, what scandal I give the Congregation by my abuse of the vow of poverty in all those and other similar things. I ask pardon of God and of the Congregation, and I beg of you, gentlemen, to bear with me in my old age. I have difficulty in bearing with myself, and it seems to me that I deserve to be hanged at Montfaucon. May God grant me grace to correct myself, although so old."

The saint concluded a conference on chastity by reading the rules concerning that virtue: "It is of the greatest importance that the Congregation be animated with an ardent desire of acquiring this virtue, and make profession of practising it at all times and in all places. This is so much the more to be attended to as the functions of the Mission oblige us to an almost continual intercourse with seculars of both sexes. Therefore every one shall endeavour to use the greatest possible care and diligence, with the utmost precaution, to preserve this virtue from the least stain, both in body and soul."

After giving the motives which inspire a love and esteem for this virtue, the saint adds: "There are two sorts of purity, purity of the body and purity of the heart. He who possesses purity of the body has not, therefore, chastity. He must add purity of heart, which

is the form and essence of this virtue. In truth, chastity drives away all evil thoughts from the imagination, from the memory and the mind. If we wish, then, to observe chastity as the rule requires, we should direct all our efforts against our heart, in order to become masters, and to root out all that can give rise to any image contrary to this sublime virtue. Remember what our Lord did on so many occasions ; that He was born of a virgin ; and that to honour this virtue, He has promised that virgins shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and that they shall sing a new canticle. O gentlemen ! let the Congregation and each of its members have the greatest esteem for this virtue, and endeavour to acquire it more and more."

" But what will aid us to practise this virtue ? It is to guard the senses, the eyes, the ears and touch. Oh, it is necessary to guard our senses with the most active vigilance ! " Then he recommended to fly the occasions ; to observe temperance in eating and drinking ; and industry. " Believe me, gentlemen, when the devil finds a person idle, he does everything he can to make him fall. Oh, what a fine opportunity he has to tempt and torment him by impure representations ! Make it, then, your study always to be occupied."

" Now, gentlemen, what shall we do to preserve this virtue, for the means just given will be of little avail, if we are not animated by the Spirit of God. We must, then, implore it from our Divine Lord, and have a firm wish and determination of giving ourselves in good earnest to His Divine Majesty, in order that He may preserve and perfect us in chastity, and estrange us from the opposite vice. If we labour in this way to acquire, preserve and advance in this virtue, it will be felt everywhere, and the Congregation will become most pleasing

in the sight of God. May it please His Divine Majesty to grant us this grace."

Again, behold in what terms he recommended obedience! "There must be something very excellent and divine in this virtue, since our Lord loved it so much that, from His birth till His death, He performed all the actions of His life through obedience. He obeyed God the Father, who willed that He should become man; He obeyed His mother, and Saint Joseph, his reputed father; He obeyed all those placed in authority, whether they were good or bad; so that His whole life was a tissue of obedience. With it He began His life, with it He ended it: *factus est obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis*—He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross; and for this reason it was, *propter quod*, that His Father has exalted Him. O Saviour! what, then, is this virtue of obedience? How excellent it is, since Thou hast found it worthy of a God! Oh, the beautiful example our Lord has given us of obedience, practising it even to the death of the cross!"

"But to whom do we owe obedience? The rule commences with our Holy Father the Pope; he is the common Father of all Christians, the visible Head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Successor of Saint Peter. We owe him obedience; we, I say, who are in the world to instruct the people in the obedience which they, as well as ourselves, ought to have for the universal Pastor of souls. It is our duty to set them the example, to carry the torch which will show them what they have to do and how they are to do it. For this end let us ask of God the grace to obey well, give ourselves to Him without reserve, and willingly receive as coming from Him all that happens to us. It is to the Pope our Lord addresses these words,' *Peter, feed My*

lambs, feed My sheep;' to him He has given the keys of the Church; he is, as it were, another species of man, so much is he raised above others; we ought therefore to consider him in our Lord and our Lord in him.

"Secondly, we owe obedience to their lordships the bishops. We priests promised them obedience when we became priests, not only to themselves and their successors, but also to those in whose dioceses we have to live and labour. We ought, then, to look upon ourselves as those servants in the Gospel to whom the father of the family says, 'Come,' and they come; 'Go,' and they go. I have always made it my special care to obey the orders of their lordships the bishops; and in fact we are subject to them and depend upon them for the missions, for catechising, hearing confessions, and administering the sacraments, although of their own kindness they have left to the Congregation its own rules and internal administration. Our Holy Father has said so in his Brief, without any effort on our part, in which he lays down that, those of ours who shall be sent on missions or to conduct seminaries shall be subject to the Ordinaries, that is, to the bishops. We owe them, then, obedience as to God. I entreat those who shall be sent into the dioceses to act in this manner, and to obey them with exactness.

"Thirdly, so far for obedience to bishops. As to parish priests, is it not reasonable? What! that a stranger should do something in their parish without their consent! That would be a great irregularity. The Congregation, from the beginning down to the present, has received the grace of always agreeing with them, and of doing nothing without their knowledge and approval."

There remains obedience to the Superior. "O wretch!" the saint exclaimed, "to obey one that is disobedient to

God, to Holy Church, to my father and mother from infancy! In a manner, my whole life has been nothing but disobedience. Alas! gentlemen, to whom do you render obedience? To him who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, is filled with vices and sins. But that is what will make your obedience more meritorious. I was thinking it over sometimes, and I remember that when a little boy, as my father was bringing me with him to town, I was ashamed to walk with him and to acknowledge him as my father, because he was ill-clad and a little lame. O wretch! how often hast thou been disobedient! I ask pardon for it of God, and for all the scandals I have given you; I ask pardon for them of you also, and of the entire Congregation. I beg of you to ask God to pardon me those faults, and to grant me heartfelt sorrow."

But humility and charity were the two virtues of which he never tired speaking. He called them the two pillars of the Congregation. "Humility," he said, "is the virtue of missioners. But what do I say? I made a mistake. I would that we possessed it, and when I said it was the virtue of missioners, I meant that it is the virtue of which they have the greatest need, and which they should most ardently desire. For this wretched Congregation, which is the least of all, should have no other foundation than humility, which should be its own peculiar virtue. Without it we shall never effect anything, either within or without; nor shall we advance ourselves or our neighbour in virtue. Yes, I say it again: if we be true missioners, each one of us will be glad to be considered as of poor and mean intellect, as a person of no virtue; will be content to be treated as ignorant, to be insulted and contemned, to have his defects cast in his face, and to be proclaimed

as insupportable by reason of his wretchedness and imperfection. I go further, and affirm that we should rejoice when it is said that our Congregation is useless, is composed of poor, simple persons; that it succeeds but little in all it undertakes; that its missions bear no fruit; that the seminaries are without the grace of God, and the ordinations without order. Yes, if we possess the spirit of Jesus Christ we should be satisfied to be reputed such as I have said. Alas! what is it to wish to be esteemed, unless to wish to be treated otherwise than the Son of God was? It is insupportable pride. When the Son of God was on earth what did He say of Himself? For what was He pleased to pass in the minds of people? For a fool, for a seditious person, as stupid, as a sinner, though He was none of these. He even wished that Barabbas, a robber and murderer, should be preferred to Him. O my Saviour! how Thy humility will, on the Day of Judgment, confound all sinners like me!"

The saint constantly returned to the subject of humility. "For," he said, "we cannot prevail against Satan by pride, he has more than we; but through humility we can conquer him, for of that he has none."

With humility, what he recommended most was charity. "Charity is the paradise of communities. Charity is the soul of virtues, and humility their guardian. In humble communities, charity is as a valley in which all the mountain streams unite. In proportion as we empty ourselves of self-love, God takes possession of our hearts. Let us humble ourselves, then, to think that God has deigned to make use of this wretched Congregation for the service of His Church. Nevertheless, our Company is poor in its origin, in its learning and virtue, and the lowest and least of all. I pray to God two or three times every day that He may annihilate us if we

are not procuring His glory. What! gentlemen, to wish to live and not to please and glorify God!"

Not only was this charity to be practised at home, but also outside of community life. "Our vocation is to go not into one parish or diocese, but to go all over the earth, to include all, and to imitate the Son of God, who has said that He came to spread fire on the earth, and to draw all men by His love. O Jesus! tell us what has drawn Thee from heaven that Thou shouldst come and suffer the miseries of earth, so much persecution and so many torments? Oh, excess of love! to humble yourself even to the death of the cross. Where can such a love be found? In whom but our Lord, enamoured as He was of creatures to that degree as to leave His throne of glory and come and take a body subject to infirmity, to take the extraordinary measures which He has taken for establishing in us and amongst us, by His words and example, charity towards God and our neighbour. Yes, it is that charity that crucified Him and wrought the wonderful work of our redemption. O gentlemen! if we have a spark of that sacred fire which burned in the heart of Jesus Christ, shall we sit with folded arms and abandon those whom we could assist?"

The saint wished that his disciples should be prepared to go to the ends of the earth, out of charity. "You would be edified were I to tell of the number of old and infirm priests who have asked to be sent to India. Whence such courage? From a detached heart, which only seeks to make God known and loved, and remains here only through His will. If we were not attached to wretched creatures, each of us would say from his heart, 'My God, I am ready to go to any place on earth, where my superiors judge proper, to announce your name, and should I even die I would be ready still to go, knowing

that my salvation is obedience, and obedience is your will.' And I, though old and wretched, should be prepared to start for India, even though I were to die on the way. For it is not health and strength that God looks for; no, He asks only a ready will, a sincere desire of embracing every occasion of serving Him, even at the peril of our lives.

"We ought to love God with the labour of our hands, with the sweat of our brow, and to serve our neighbour at the risk of our property, nay, our very life. How happy to become poor through charity! Yes, if God should permit that we be reduced to begging, to be homeless and wretched, and that anybody ask, 'Poor Priest of the Mission, what has reduced you to this?' how happy, gentlemen, to be able to reply, 'Charity.' Oh, what a beautiful object is such a priest in the sight of God and His angels!"

Thus were escaping from the heart of Saint Vincent the treasures which his sanctity had amassed during eighty-five years. Only a few months separated him from death, and his beautiful soul seemed to receive a new light. His children pressed around him, listening on bended knees for the least whisper. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, they felt their hearts warmed by the words of so great a master.

BOOK VI

DEATH OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL—HIS VIRTUES—HIS CANONISATION—HIS RELICS—LATEST HONOURS RENDERED TO HIS MEMORY BY THE HOLY SEE

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CHAPTER I

DEATH OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

1660

THE completion of the rules of the Congregation of the Mission, and of the Sisters of Charity, was a source of deep joy to Saint Vincent de Paul. When in 1645 he had a dangerous illness, he was asked if there was anything that disquieted him, and his reply was, "Nothing, except that we have not drawn up the rules." This unique disquietude was now gone, and nothing was left but to crown with a holy death a life that had been so fruitful in good works. From the very beginning of 1660 it became evident that his end was not far off. He was now eighty-five, but what alarmed his confrères most was the sudden and grave increase of his infirmities. Naturally Saint Vincent's constitution was strong, and it was well that it was so, to enable him to undergo so many labours and austerities. He had, however, two very weak points. The first was bad circulation, which resulted in what he called his "little fever"; and secondly, he suffered from a peculiar trouble in his legs, which became inflamed and ulcerated from the least fatigue. What was the cause of this second affliction,

greater even than the first, and which lasted for forty-five years? Was it, as some hold, the result of his captivity in Tunis, or was it the consequence of heart-disease? Whatever may have been the cause, it assumed alarming symptoms in 1660. The saint wrote on January 11, "I can no longer go downstairs, on account of my limbs, which are worse than ever;" and nineteen days afterwards, "I cannot at present even say mass." He was then compelled to have crutches, with which he hobbled to the chapel to receive Holy Communion; but soon they had to be abandoned, for they irritated his sores, and besides, it was feared that a fall, if it occurred, should prove fatal. Hence his priests besought him to remain in his room.

However, he was suffering from a long-standing infirmity rather than a sudden illness, and no immediate danger was apprehended. On April 3 the saint wrote, "I can no longer go to see you, because of the weakness in my legs, but otherwise I am well."

In troubles of this nature the mind ordinarily retains the greatest clearness. This was remarkable in Saint Vincent. Seated at his little table he gave audiences and dictated letters. His secretary was Brother Ducourneau, and no less than 281 letters are dated during the last few months of the saint's life. Some of these were long, and were addressed to the Superiors in Rome, Turin, Genoa, Warsaw and Marseilles. Others were to the Sisters of Charity, or to the Nuns of the Visitation, or, finally, to bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, treating of the most difficult questions of administration. Throughout them all, however, are manifested the same wisdom, prudence and firmness, the same moderation and consideration for others, not to speak of the humility and other virtues which appear on every page.

Towards the middle of February two new trials arose which rendered the saint's inability to leave his room all the more painful: Mlle. le Gras and Father Portail fell dangerously ill almost simultaneously. Both received the last sacraments on February 14, and Saint Vincent felt keenly that he could not visit either.

Father Portail was the first and dearest of the saint's disciples. Their friendship dated back to the Collège des Bons-Enfants and the missions of Montmirail and Folleville. Since then they had never parted. Our saint had absolute confidence in Father Portail, and when his own infirmity prevented him from going out, he confided to him the direction of the Sisters of Charity. He was a man of candour, extreme modesty, and of rare delicacy of conscience, from which sprang a great fear of death and judgment. Saint Vincent constantly urged him to have confidence, and, like all pure souls, when death did come he met it without alarm.

Saint Vincent wrote on February 27: "Father Portail always had a great dread of death, but when he saw it approaching he lost this fear, as he often assured me. He died as he had lived, in the good use of suffering, in the practice of virtue, and in the desire of passing his life, like our Lord, in the accomplishment of God's will. He was one of the first two missioners, and held many appointments in the Congregation, which he has served with admirable fidelity. His should be a great loss, were it not that we know God disposes all for the best, and when we think we lose, then in reality we gain. We may therefore justly hope that Father Portail will do us more service in heaven than he should have done on earth."

He adds: "At the time of Father Portail's departure, Mlle. le Gras was also in grave danger. But, thanks be

to God, who does not wish to overwhelm us with affliction, she is improving."

That improvement did not last long, for a month afterwards, on the 15th March, she died. It was the design of Providence to fill her last hour with the greatest sacrifices. Father Portail, her confessor, was, like herself, on his death-bed, and Saint Vincent was confined to his room. Seeing that she could not expect a visit from him, she thought of asking him to write some words of encouragement. But the saint, whose mind was already in heaven, knew well the detachment of which Mlle. le Gras was capable, and wished to add a new jewel to her crown by refusing her request. He merely sent one of his priests to say, "You are going before me, but I hope in a short time to see you again in heaven." That meeting was to be before six months.

The last moments of Mlle. le Gras exhibited the highest virtue. She was suffering much, but without complaint and without wishing for sympathy. "It must be so," she said, "that pain should be where sin hath dwelt. God is just, and in His justice He worketh mercy." The Holy Viaticum was brought, and by her bed knelt on one side her son, her daughter-in-law and grandchild, while on the other were the Sisters of Charity. She blessed them all. Her illness being very tedious, she desired to receive Holy Viaticum again, and it was arranged that she should do so the next morning. All night she prepared herself by making the most ardent acts of love, and when she had received for the second time, she again blessed the Sisters of Charity, impressing upon them always to live in union, cordiality, and with a high esteem for their vocation, adding that were she to live a hundred years this is the only advice she

should give. Her last words were, "Be ever solicitous in the service of the poor." The priest was about to give her the plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*, but she said, "It is not time yet!" Shortly afterwards she struck her breast and beckoned them to begin, and having received the last blessing, she drew the curtains as if wishing to be alone. Five or six minutes afterwards she died, while her spiritual daughters knelt weeping by her bed. It was the opinion of the curé of Saint-Laurent that she brought with her to judgment the grace she received in baptism. Saint Vincent was informed from time to time of her condition, and it consoled but overcame him. He was not content in speaking her praise, but the day after her death wrote a letter to each of the houses of the Congregation, to announce the great affliction which had befallen it. "I recommend," he said, "the soul of Mlle. le Gras to your prayers, though perhaps she stands not in need of them, for we feel confident she now enjoys the glory promised to those who serve God and the poor as she did."

It was the custom when any of the Sisters of Charity died, to assemble those sisters that were at that time in Paris, and speak to them of the virtues of the deceased. How the saint desired to do this now! But amid all his emotions his infirmity was increasing, and his limbs were not only inflamed but ulcerated. It was pitiable to see him. They conjured him to allow a room next his own to be transformed into an oratory, but he would not hear of it. "No, no," he replied, "oratories are only permitted in cases of absolute necessity; such is not my case." He likewise strongly opposed his being carried in a chair to the chapel by two lay-brothers. That two men should so abase themselves was a martyrdom to him. Every time he went to the chapel he asked their pardon

in such an humble tone that it was necessary to give it up. It was then resolved to postpone speaking of the virtues of Mlle. le Gras till such times as he had so far improved as to be able to go to the house of the Sisters of Charity.

April, May and June passed by without the desired improvement. On May 28 he wrote: "There is no news here. All are well. It is true I suffer a little from my limbs, and cannot move about without great difficulty." In the beginning of July his condition became more serious. On the 14th he wrote: "My limbs do not allow me to sleep at night, nor to walk by day, nor even to stand. Beyond that I am very well." Sister Julienne wrote about the same time: "Our most honoured Father is in very good spirits, thank God, but he can no longer move. We must be resigned to the will of God, for he shall scarcely survive next winter." This was giving him even too long, for he had only two months to live. Under these circumstances it was resolved to postpone the conference on the virtues of Mlle. le Gras no longer, and all the sisters were summoned to meet at Saint-Lazare on July 24. Everything contributed to the touching solemnity of this conference. The Sisters of Charity felt that they were now to look upon their holy founder for the last time, and that, too, while he spoke of her whom they regarded as their mother and their model. Ever a lover of simplicity, Saint Vincent did not depart from the usual form of the conferences, but having said the *Veni Sancte Spiritus,* thus began: "My dear sisters, I thank God for having spared me till now, that I might see you thus united. You know well that I should have wished to meet you during the trying illness of Mlle. le Gras, but I was unable to do so. It was the will of God, and

I believe for the greater perfection of her of whom we are about to speak. As our Lord has so recently taken from our midst the good Father Portail, a word in passing about him will not be inopportune, though we are assembled principally to speak of the virtues of Mlle. le Gras."

The saint then began, as usual, to interrogate the sisters on the virtues which they remarked in the deceased. The first sister that was called was so overcome with grief that she could not speak, and the saint passed on to another. Each one spoke of what particularly struck her in the conduct of Mlle. le Gras. One spoke of her love of the poor: "She had a great love for the poor, and took great delight in serving them. I have witnessed her assemble prisoners as they came out of prison, wash their feet, and distribute among them her son's clothes." Another of her humility: "I have seen her lying prostrate on the ground, ready to let any one trample her under foot. She washed the vessels, and ardently wished to do the other household work as much as her strength would permit. She served in the refectory, and asked pardon for her faults." A third spoke of her prudence: "I never knew a person who had greater prudence; she had this virtue in the highest degree, and I ardently hope that the Company may also have it." A fourth of her humility and poverty: "I remarked that she greatly desired that the sisters should live in a spirit of humility and poverty. She often used to say, 'We are the servants of the poor, and consequently ought to be poorer than they.'"

Then Saint Vincent began: "You may well say that your mother had a high esteem for poverty. To be convinced of it we have only to look at her clothes. Although she was poorly clad, she thought she had too

much, and wished only to be treated as a poor person. As regards the Company, it was most prudent that your good mother trained you for twenty-five years to be exact in this spirit of poverty in everything: in your dress, your food and in all your wants. What a misfortune if any of you should relax on this point, and instead of being content with frugal fare, seek dainties! Ah! if unhappily any of you should say we are not well fed, &c., my sisters, you should at once cry wolf, wolf, for such a spirit should be stifled in the beginning. My dear sisters, preserve poverty, and poverty will preserve you."

He then called some other sisters, who spoke of her charity. "She had for us all so great a charity that she seemed consumed by it." Of her purity one said, "Pure in her youth, in her marriage, in her widowhood, she wept over the slightest faults of levity, and could hardly be consoled."

By this time the sister who was called first had recovered sufficiently, and addressing Saint Vincent, said, "Father, if you think well of it, I shall speak."—"Oh! certainly," replied the saint, himself now overcome with grief. This was the sister whom Mlle. le Gras had asked to admonish her of her faults. "I had great difficulty in performing that duty," she said, "for although I watched her closely I could discover none." She next spoke, like the other sisters, of the virtues of the deceased, and then Saint Vincent brought the conference to a close with these words: "Miserable sinner though I am, I beg our Lord to bless you by the merits of the blessing He gave His Apostles when about to leave them. May He detach you from everything earthly, and attach your hearts to the things of heaven."

"*Benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Patris, et Filii, et*

Spiritus sancti, descendat super vos et maneat semper. Amen."

Although this conference was very taxing on the little strength which Saint Vincent had, yet it was a real consolation to him to be able to pay, in presence of all her daughters, his tribute of veneration and gratitude to her who had so powerfully helped him in his great works. He might have seized this opportunity to say adieu to the Sisters of Charity, for he felt it was to be their last meeting ; but always an enemy of singularity, he did not even allude to his approaching death. This course he everywhere pursued, and seated at his table, he continued to dictate letters and govern his community without any apparent change in his manner. In connection with this trait of his last days a singular incident occurred. It is a custom in the Congregation that the Superiors may read the letters going out and coming in. One of the priests brought his letter to Saint Vincent, in which there happened to be the following remark : "M. Vincent is visibly declining, and it is evident we shall soon lose him." Saint Vincent was surprised when he met this, not at the news, but he felt it was a hint for him to prepare. Perhaps this good priest was disedified that he was not making more extraordinary preparation for death, and thinking that he might not realise its approach, made use of this means to warn him. This was what Saint Vincent in his humility concluded. He sent for the priest and said : "Sir, I am extremely thankful for the good advice you have given me. It was exceedingly kind of you, and now be good enough to complete the charity by admonishing me of any other faults you may have noticed in my conduct." — "O Father!" replied the missioner, in the greatest embarrassment, "I assure you I had no idea of giving you advice

through my letter, it was quite unintentional."—"Don't disturb yourself," replied the saint, "I should have honoured you all the more had you intended to do so. Lest you might be surprised at not seeing me make greater preparation for my death, now at hand, let me tell you, sir, that for eighteen years I have never gone to sleep without having placed myself in readiness to die that night." He might have also said that for fifteen years, since his severe illness in 1645, to his night prayers he always added those for extreme unction.

August was a severe month of suffering for Saint Vincent. His legs were more inflamed and ulcerated, and matter constantly flowed from his sores. His feet could not be kept warm, and his mind, up to this so clear, was now beginning to fail. He fell asleep from time to time during the day, and even while at work could not resist the inclination. He always most humbly apologised, or sometimes with a smile he would say, "It is the brother which precedes the sister," meaning that sleep was the forerunner of death. He now resolved to say adieu to two of his illustrious benefactors. The first of these was Philippe-Emanuel de Gondi, in whose house he had been tutor for twelve years, and whose noble wife so largely contributed in life and death to the saint's charitable undertakings. When he became a widower Philippe-Emanuel de Gondi abandoned the world, and becoming a priest of the Oratory, lived there in humility and penance, rejecting even a cardinal's hat, and died in his chosen obscurity at the age of eighty. The following is the letter in which the saint bids him adieu :—

"My Lord,—The grave state of my health compels me to take this opportunity of asking your forgiveness

for any displeasure I may have given you by my want of manners, and also to express to you most humbly my exceeding thanks for your kindness towards me, as well as your innumerable acts of charity towards our little Company. Be assured, my lord, as long as God leaves me the power to pray, I shall employ it in this world and in the next for you and yours. Desiring to be in time and eternity, yours, &c."

The second of his illustrious benefactors was Philippe-Emanuel's third son, the saint's former pupil, since become Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris, and known in history as the famous Cardinal de Retz. This man, amid all his levity, had never forgotten his former tutor, though he knew his conduct caused him many a tear. Thanks to the saint's prayers, the Cardinal was beginning to give up his worldliness, was even thinking of resigning the archbishopric, and of ending his days, like his father, in solitude and penance. One cannot but remark in this letter the saint's lively spirit of faith, which makes him forget in Cardinal de Retz the person of his former pupil and a man of many faults, only to see in him the exalted dignitary of Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris.

"My Lord Cardinal,—In consequence of my age and infirmities, I am inclined to think that this is the last time I shall have the honour of addressing your Eminence. I most humbly beg your Eminence to pardon me if in anything I have displeased you. I am so ignorant that I may have done so, but I have never intended it. I presume also to recommend to your Eminence this little Congregation of the Mission, which you have helped not only to establish, but also supported and favoured. As the work of your hands, it acknow-

ledges you with grateful submission as its father and its prelate. It will always pray for your Eminence and the house of De Retz; and if in the mercy of God I have the happiness of being admitted to the Divine presence, I shall always intercede for your Eminence. Humbly begging your Eminence's blessing, I remain, &c."

It was now the end of August and the saint's malady was daily increasing. Should one tumour burst, it would be sufficient to crown his martyrdom. The worse he became, the less aid he wished for. "He clutched a cord fastened to a beam in his room, and amid all his terrible suffering the only words that escaped his lips were, 'Ah! my Saviour! my merciful Saviour!'" From time to time he cast his eyes on his wooden crucifix, still preserved as a relic, and found in it consolation and support.

Two important matters occupied his mind in these his last moments.

The first was not to leave the Sisters of Charity orphans, but to appoint a successor to Mlle. le Gras. For this purpose it would be necessary to assemble the sisters, but the doctors feared such a strain. On the 27th August, however, the saint had them convoked, and addressed them in his usual simple style. He related how one day when Mlle. le Gras was ill, he asked her whom she thought the most suitable person to replace her. After some moments' reflection, she replied: "It seems to me that Sister Marguerite Chétif would be the best selection. Everywhere she has proved herself most prudent and successful. At Arras, where she is at present, she has worked wonders, and showed the greatest courage among the soldiers." Coinciding with this view, and in obedience to the last wishes of Mlle.

le Gras, Sister Marguerite Chétif was nominated Mother-General of the Sisters of Charity.

Now that this appointment was made, the saint began to think of making another, namely, that of his own successor as Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Sisters of Charity. Perhaps he had originally intended this position for Father Portail, but death had taken him away. He next turned his attention to Father Almeras, notwithstanding that he was seriously ill at the house of the Oratorians in Tours. This distinguished priest the saint wished to succeed him in the government of his Congregation, and placing his nomination in a sealed box, confided it to Father Berthe, with instructions that it should not be opened till after his death. Although Saint Vincent did not intend to disclose this secret to Father Almeras, yet he was most anxious to see him. He wrote letter after letter begging of him to hasten back. "The little Company," he wrote, "is greatly distressed at your absence, and it would console me more than anything to see you return." In the following letter of the saint, Father Almeras's nomination can be clearly seen, though not expressed: "When shall we have the consolation of seeing you? Oh, how I desire it! I often ask God for it, not only for my own sake, which is by no means small on account of the affection and esteem I bear you, but more especially for the sake of the Congregation which is so edified by your example. I speak in this manner from a motive of gratitude towards God and you, sir, and that, all the more, because it will serve to show you how agreeable it is to God that you should preserve your health. Take every remedy in your power, and especially implore the assistance of God, who will not refuse you that strength of body and mind necessary

for His designs upon you in our Company, if you ask it through the merits of our Lord, who has raised us up for His service. Spare nothing then which can contribute to your health and speedy return, for which we are all so anxious."

Although Father Almeras did not suspect the thoughts that filled the mind of Saint Vincent, yet the letters were too pressing not to make him summon up all his strength to set out at once. He went to Richelieu first, and from there to Paris, where he arrived on September 24, 1660, so spent and worn that he had to be conveyed immediately to the infirmary, without even being able to salute his beloved Father. The next morning, however, Saint Vincent had himself carried to the infirmary, and there these two old and cherished friends had a long and last interview. What passed between them we can never know. Probably the most important matters connected with the administration of the Congregation were discussed, but it became evident by his astonishment when the sealed box was afterwards opened, that not a word was said by the saint to allow Father Almeras to know of the appointment which awaited him.

Here was the last noble act of that grand character. We may say that God allowed the saint to perfect the works he had begun, and called him to Himself only when there was nothing left for him to do. After his interview with Father Almeras on September 25, the saint was carried back to his room, and towards midday such a deep sleep seized him that it was thought his last hour had arrived. The next day, however, being Sunday, he arose, went to Mass and Holy Communion, but so startling was his condition that the doctors thought every moment might be his last, and

at half-past six Father d'Horgny administered extreme unction.

As usual, Father d'Horgny began with the interrogation. "Do you desire to receive the last sacraments?"—"Yes."—"Do you believe all that the Church teaches?"—"Yes."—"Do you believe in one God in three Divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?"—"Yes." Each question aroused our saint from his deep sleep, and he made an effort to reply; but only the first words of his answer were distinct, the rest was but an inarticulate murmur.

When he had finished these questions Father d'Horgny continued: "Ask pardon of all?"—"With all my heart I do."—"Do you pardon us all?"—"Every one." And he evidently strove to add, "No one has offended me." Next Father d'Horgny repeated the acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition, and then told the dying saint that they were about to say the *Confiteor*, and that all he might do was to strike his breast at the *mea culpa;* but this was not enough for him, and summoning up all his strength he repeated it in full.

The unctions were then begun, and after each the saint tried to say Amen. At the last unction he came to himself a little more, and opening his eyes, he cast a sweet smile on those around. They were desirous of profiting by this opportunity, and asked a blessing for all his children. "It is not for me . . ." but here the saint fell off again into a doze, and could not add with his wonted humility, "wretch that I am, to give you a blessing." His head leaned forward on his breast, and the brothers in turn sustained him all that night.

About nine o'clock Fathers Bécu, Grimal, Bourdet and the older members of the community came to bid him their last farewell. As each passed by his bedside he

repeated a passage from Holy Scripture, and as at the voice of an angel, the dying hero of charity answered, "*Paratum . . .*" Father d'Horgny and Father Berthe, seizing upon this new opportunity, again asked the saint to bless all his spiritual children, friends and benefactors. Then the saint, lifting his eyes, and meeting those of his prostrate children, said in a distinct voice, "May God bless you." The older fathers, now satisfied with this precious legacy, withdrew, leaving Father Berthe and the stronger ones to remain up all night. From time to time they repeated such pious ejaculations as "Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy," and the saint replied, "Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy . . .", or again, "Mother of God, remember me." But most frequently of all they repeated the saint's favourite prayer: "Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me."

Towards eleven o'clock a sweat came over him, and his pulse became imperceptible. The sweat becoming cold, it was thought that his last hour had come, and Father d'Horgny at once called Fathers Bourdet, Bécu and de Monchy, who began the prayers for a departing soul. One repeated the holy name of "Jesus," and the dying saint feebly echoed it. Another exclaimed, "O God, incline unto my aid," but the word "God" was all that he was able to say. Now, however, the cold sweat passed off, and his pulse again began to beat.

About a quarter-past twelve Brother Nicholas said, "Sir?" and the saint sweetly replied, "Well, brother," but fell off again.

At half-past one they asked for another blessing for his spiritual children. "May God bless them," he replied, and gathering all the strength he had, he raised his hand and added, "*Qui cæpit opus, ipse perficiet.*" Then Father d'Horgny said, "Your blessing on the members of

the Tuesday Conferences." — "Yes." — "On the Sisters of Charity." — "Yes." — "On the foundlings."—"Yes." —"On the Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus."—Yes." —"On all benefactors and friends."—"Yes."

At two o'clock the cold sweat came on again, and one of the priests began the Creed, *Credo in Deum Patrem.* The saint replied, "*Credo,*" and kissed a crucifix which he held in his hands. "*Credo in Jesum Christum. Credo,*" he again repeated, as he again pressed the crucifix to his lips, and so on with all the other articles of faith. "*Spero,*" continued the priest; "*in te speravi, in Domino confido.*"—"*Confido,*" murmured the saint, and again he kissed the crucifix, the symbol of his faith, the pledge of his confident hope.

A little before four o'clock his countenance began to wear a glowing tint, as if on fire. They suggested holy ejaculations to him. He moved his lips, but could not close them, for this time death had come.

It was just at four o'clock in the morning, the hour at which for forty years he rose to pray, that this saintly soul began its agony, and after a quarter of an hour, without convulsion or struggle, went before its God. It was Monday, September 27, that Saint Vincent, seated in an arm-chair, thus peacefully passed away in his eighty-fifth year. His body remained as flexible as in life, and his countenance wore a serene and venerable aspect that struck all who beheld it. Even in this world God glorifies His saints.

His organs were found to be quite sound, and his heart was preserved in a beautiful silver case presented by the Duchess d'Aiguillon. The remains were placed on a catafalque, and six ecclesiastics continued day and night to recite the office of the dead. A large concourse of people came to pay their homage to the dead saint, and

among them were princes, bishops, religious and the distinguished ladies of Paris. The Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity were constantly weeping round the tomb of their father, and the poor of the city strove with each other to kiss the hands or feet of him who had spent his life for them.

The funeral was attended by an immense number. First came the Priests of the Mission, led by the saint's successor, Father Almeras; next the Sisters of Charity, headed by their new Mother-General, Margaret Chétif. They were followed by the princes, including the Prince of Conti, the King's cousin, the Papal Nuncio, the bishops, the Presidents of the Assemblies, the magistrates, and all the distinguished ladies of the capital. In this sad cortège might be seen the most eminent of the French clergy walking together as members of the Tuesday Conferences, and among them Bossuet, who could not restrain his tears. Last, but first to the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul, came in their thousands the poor of Paris, those chosen ones who might aptly be called the saint's chief mourners.

The remains, enclosed in a double coffin, were deposited in the choir of the Church of Saint-Lazare, and the following inscription placed over the tomb: "*Hic jacet venerabilis vir Vincentius a Paulo, presbyter, fundator, seu institutor, et primus superior generalis congregationis Missionis, nec non Puellarum Charitatis. Obiit die* 27 *septembris anni* 1660, *ætatis vero suæ* 85. *Præfuit annis* 35."

Two months afterwards the members of the Tuesday Conferences, with Bossuet at their head, held a special meeting at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. What a beautiful testimony Bossuet would have placed on record had he spoken; but being then only Archdeacon of Metz, the Bishop of Puy, who was intimately acquainted with our

saint, was given precedence. He spoke for two hours on the profound humility and incomparable charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. Of this funeral oration we shall not speak, except to admire Bossuet's humility in the eulogium he passed upon it.

Those who were unable to be present at the obsequies of our saint sent letters of apology, which bore testimony to the widespread admiration in which he was held. From the terms in which Louis XIV., Anne of Austria, the Queen of Poland, the Prince of Conti, Père de Gondi, Bossuet, the archbishops, bishops and the most distinguished religious of both sexes spoke of the deceased saint, it was evident that the time should soon arrive when his remains would be raised upon the altars of the Church.

CHAPTER II

SAINT VINCENT'S NATURAL QUALITIES

HAVING reached the close of this extraordinary life, one of the most fruitful in good works that has ever existed, it remains for us to contemplate once for all the characteristics of a man at the same time so great, so simple, so modest, so humble, and who, notwithstanding his humility, or rather in consequence of it, has left his mark on the period in which he lived. Let us begin with his exterior, and gather from it our first impressions of his mind.

In looking at the true likeness of Saint Vincent de Paul, what strikes us at once is his resolute aspect. His eyes, deeply set, shone with a singular brightness which seemed to penetrate to one's very soul, while at the same time they clearly revealed a kindly disposition. His forehead was large and clear, denoting an abiding serenity. His nose was not striking; but his mouth, a sure index of character, was finely shaped. His whole person had an air of gravity and authority, which might have erred on the side of excess, had he not laboured to acquire that suavity which made his manner so attractive. While still young, he prayed ardently to be relieved of a morose disposition which might estrange people from him. His prayer was heard, and the kindness, humility and charity that shone in his countenance have made him one of the most sympathetic figures that ever existed in the Church.

Portraits of the saint have been spread without number, but often his true likeness is not reproduced. The resoluteness of his character is not sufficiently emphasised, while its tender side, no doubt extreme, is unduly exaggerated. Fortunately two excellent portraits remain, painted by two great masters, which will ever preserve the true characteristics of our saint.

The first is by Philippe de Champagne. We have carefully examined it, and can flatter ourselves that we have seen Saint Vincent almost as really as Mlle. le Gras or Father Portail. Where, when and how this portrait was taken we have been unable to discover.

More details remain of the portrait made by Simon-François, and so often copied, especially by the two great artists, Van Schuppen and Édelinck. Twenty times was Saint Vincent asked to have his portrait taken, but even the Duchess d'Aiguillon, Mme. Goussault, or Mme. Lamoignon had no greater success in persuading him than Mlle. le Gras or Father Portail. "A poor wretch like me, a miserable sinner," the saint would say, "to have his portrait taken! Oh no;" and he said this in such a tone that no hope was left of persuading him. Then they adopted the same tactics as the celebrated painter Rigault so successfully used with De Rancé, the great reformer of La Trappe. Simon-François was brought to Saint-Lazare, like so many other pious laymen, to make a retreat. Ostensibly for this purpose he remained several days, assisting at the saint's mass, hearing his instructions, and sitting opposite to him in the refectory. After each exercise the painter retired to his room and took down the impressions which struck him. The saint had no idea of what was being done, and thus was finished that excellent likeness of which so many copies are to be found. It serves to correct these

numerous portraits which threatened to misrepresent the true physiognomy of our saint.

But this painting is not enough to preserve the true likeness of Saint Vincent. We must closely examine his mind, his heart, his character—in a word, his very soul; for here, again, there are many erroneous conceptions to remove. We shall boldly assert at once, what may surprise many, that his intellectual gifts came very near to genius. This, however, is our deliberate opinion, based on the very best grounds. To what heights he might have reached, had he applied his mind to purely philosophical or theological questions, we shall not presume to say. For pure theory he had no taste, and it is doubtful whether his imagination was very powerful. But in practical questions he had no equal. His penetration was extreme. Nothing escaped him. When a new scheme was proposed to him, he saw at a glance its advantages and disadvantages, its helps and its hindrances. If he, after examining the matter from all sides, decided to undertake the work, no one might fear that something unforeseen would prevent its execution. As a matter of fact, he never abandoned what he once undertook. Never was he forced to withdraw and say, I was mistaken. His humility would have at once made him say so, but no opportunity ever occurred, so great was his foresight and the depth of his penetration.

To this keen penetration Saint Vincent joined an exceptional courage, the product of his great mind. People thought him timid; nobody was more courageous. So it was when he faced discouragement from Rome, the bishops and others, beginning what they considered novelties, but what time showed to be measures both adequate and opportune. What courage did

he not show in the institution of the Sisters of Charity, drawing them from the cloister, and sending them without any other veil than their modesty to labour among soldiers and the sick! Where Saint Francis de Sales had drawn back, he stood firm and triumphed. What courage again to break with past traditions, to withstand the opposition of Rome, and establish the Congregation of the Mission, not as a religious order, but as a new form of life consecrated to God and adapted to the needs of modern society—a Congregation that has been the model to all founders for the last three hundred years! What courage in the work of the foundlings! When the Duchess d'Aiguillon, Mme. Goussault and Mme. Lamoignon said it was folly to continue it any longer, Saint Vincent, relying on his spirit of faith and charity, resolved that the work, despite all difficulties, should not be abandoned, and here again he succeeded. What courage to send his missioners to Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, and invest them with consular power! Oh, why had not Louis XIV., Mazarin, or Anne of Austria even an ounce of Saint Vincent's courage! and far different would have been the results for the Church and for France. But above all, what courage was manifested by this poor priest, who, when France, Spain and Italy remained indifferent, thought of raising a fleet to sail against the Turks, and had not death intervened, perhaps two centuries before Charles X. the French flag should have been floating on the ramparts of Algiers.

Courage is admirable, but only on condition that it is directed, governed and restrained by common-sense. Picture courage without common-sense, and what peril! On the other hand, common-sense without decision and courage, and what weakness! But unite those three

qualities, the solid foundation of common-sense with the swift wings of decision and courage, and of what will not such a character be capable? Now Saint Vincent's common-sense was not less than his decision and courage, nay, perhaps it was greater. He had that rare good sense which Bossuet calls the mastery of life, for, when possessed to a certain degree, it confers on its owner a kind of infallibility.

To these excellent qualities, with which great works are begun, he added another, without which they cannot be completed. He had a genius for organisation. This showed itself from the very beginning. When at the instance of his moving appeal, the rich of Châtillon-les-Dombes came *en masse* to help a starving family, Saint Vincent exclaimed: "Behold noble but ill-regulated charity! These poor people shall have more than enough to-day, but to-morrow they shall be as bad as ever. Let us organise." Then without any delay he formed an association, gave it rules, and he did the same every place he went. He did not, however, originate all his works, for many of them were suggested by friends, or sprang naturally from the current he had created. But it was he alone who gave them their lasting form. At Trévoux, Mâçon and Paris, he not only instituted associations for men and women, priests and religious; he not only established shelters for the foundling, homes for the aged, and hospitals for the sick; but he gave to each a code of rules so complete that they never required alteration, and so adapted to attain their end that they have become the model of all modern charitable institutions. His schemes for the support of the different associations of charity, even in country districts, his institution of soup-kitchens, his manufactories for boys and his successful overthrow of mendicity are not

only bold and courageous conceptions, but masterpieces of statesmanship which go far to prove that he possessed the power of government in the highest degree.

All these grand qualities are evident in the saint's writings. He wrote little except letters, which, however, were very numerous. In 1664, only four years after his death, 30,000 letters were extant, but a century afterwards Collet could not find more than 7,000, while at present there are only 2,500. In these letters we must not seek the graceful style of Saint Francis de Sales, nor the oratory that pervades the letters of Bossuet, nor the subtle finesse of Fénelon. But gravity, common-sense, firmness, a deep knowledge of men and things, and an eminently practical mind are manifest on every page. They are letters in the art of governing, of a statesman capable of guiding an empire. The style, it is true, is somewhat involved and embarrassed, whether from want of imagination or from deliberate design. The frequent corrections which are to be found were not exceptional at that period, as may be seen from the letters of Bossuet and his contemporaries. But that heavy style which is found in the saint's letters disappeared when he spoke. To write well is one thing, to speak well is another. Writing requires art, and Saint Vincent did not seek it. Speaking wants but a head and a heart, and he was exceptionally gifted in both. His heart carried him away, and tore from him those noble sentiments and eloquent appeals, which show that he possessed the eloquence of character, which is the highest of all.

After dwelling on his mental capacity we shall not delay to speak of his great heart, for on that point there is only one voice. What characterised it was not sensibility, too often impressionable and

transient, nor tenderness, too frequently partial and uncertain. No, it was none of these; it was higher, wider, stronger and more God-like: it was kindness. Bossuet was thinking perhaps of his old master when he wrote these eloquent words: "When God made man's heart, the noblest sentiment He placed in it was kindness." This is especially true of Saint Vincent de Paul. In every human soul there is a ray of kindness, otherwise it would not resemble the Creator. But in Saint Vincent this gift was boundless, and gave him a spirit of beneficence which left him no equal. That Saint Francis de Sales had this noble quality Saint Vincent himself attests when he said, "Oh! how kind God must be when the Bishop of Geneva is so much so." But the kindness of Saint Francis was in compassionating the unfortunate, that of Saint Vincent in relieving them. All the saints had this gift; but in some it was concentrated on the poor; in others on the sick, on the aged, or the infirm. But the kindness of Saint Vincent was not confined to one class, it was universal, healing every wound and relieving every sorrow. For every species of suffering he found a solace, and he devised remedies adequately adapted to remove every want. His great heart, burning with charity, was ever finding new resources to stem the torrent of human misery, and he has left behind him works so numerous, so varied and so perfect, that by his charity he stands pre-eminent, even among the saints. Well might Mme. Lamoignon say of him that he had done more than twenty saints put together.

In following the history of Saint Vincent de Paul we may notice that his wonderful activity in doing good did not manifest itself at once. This man, who was to do so much, never hurried. At fifty he had not yet begun.

He appeared before that period not to have contemplated doing anything by way of preparation for his great works. Far from that, he even sought a benefice, and thought of leaving Paris to live in a little village of the Béarn, near his aged mother. He accepted a tutorship, a position usually mediocre and without prospect, but he abandoned it for the care of 3000 souls in Châtillon-les-Dombes. When at length Providence had guided him to the true field of his labours, he, who was essentially a man of action, at first manifested no taste for it. He never sought it, nay, he fled from it, and refused it as long as he prudently could. Whether it was that his powerful mind saw difficulties and obstacles, or his humility persuaded him that he was not worthy, or his fear of forestalling, as he used to say, the moment of Providence, the fact is, however, that we might almost say he was wanting in taking the initiative. His principal works were suggested by others or evoked by circumstances. The ladies of Châtillon-les-Dombes suggested the idea of the Ladies' Association of Charity; Mme. de Gondi the idea of the Congregation of the Mission; Mme. Goussault the Hôtel-Dieu. He always urged time and patience, nay, he frequently multiplied objections, but this was with a view to purify and strengthen the undertaking. Sometimes the authority of the Archbishop of Paris had to be brought to bear on him. But once he undertook a work he sealed it with a stamp of perfection.

It has been said that as Saint Thomas compiled the Summa of Faith, so Saint Vincent compiled the Summa of Charity. This distinction, however, must be made, that Saint Vincent did not set out with the intention of renewing the ancient traditions and works of charity, in order to harmonise them with the modern, and unite

both in a majestic whole. No; according as he met suffering and vice, he at once sought a remedy, and if in the end the result of his labours was a vast and magnificent combination of works to relieve every kind of want and misery, a veritable Summa of Charity, he did not claim the credit of its design.

Finally, to complete the sketch of his character, we must add that having once undertaken a work he never abandoned it. Nothing was capable of diverting him, neither difficulties in the execution, the opposition of persons, nor that weariness which supervenes on protracted efforts. He began quietly, patiently and opportunely, and then followed out his plan with rare constancy and invincible courage.

Behold what we may call the natural qualities of Saint Vincent de Paul; for from his very infancy they were so absorbed in grace that it is difficult to contemplate them apart from it. Sometimes it was charity that inflamed his noble heart and evoked those extraordinary acts of kindness. Sometimes it was faith that illumined his powerful mind and inspired him with those sublime conceptions. It was the same with all his faculties. Each of them was beautifully prepared by God to be, as it were, the setting for a corresponding divine virtue, so that none of them can be viewed except in the light of grace. As no action of Jesus Christ was purely human, but by virtue of the hypostatic union each was at once human and divine, so in a certain sense we cannot dissociate the natural and supernatural qualities of Saint Vincent de Paul. Let us then ascend higher, and having contemplated the great man, let us now contemplate the great saint.

CHAPTER III

SAINT VINCENT'S SUPERNATURAL QUALITIES

It was not his genius but his sanctity that made Saint Vincent de Paul what he was. Without sanctity, though wonderfully endowed, he never could have accomplished the works which have made his name so renowned. His great mind would not have been sufficiently exalted, nor his tender heart sufficiently deep, nor even his grand character strong enough to overcome the obstacles which he met. Instead, perhaps, of crowning his career amid the glory of so many works so perfectly conceived and so admirably realised, we should witness him, like so many other philanthropists, die sad and discouraged, having yearned to do so much, yet having done so little.

Besides, Saint Vincent did not rely on his natural qualities to found his great works; on the contrary, he ignored and despised them. He used to call himself a wretch, a sinner, one fit for nothing. He spoke in these terms, which from other lips might provoke a laugh, but from his commanded attention and respect. It is generally believed that the great virtue of Saint Vincent de Paul was his charity, but we presume to say it was his humility, which seems to have been the very depth of his soul, and to have shone forth spontaneously on every occasion. While praising one of his missioners he adds of himself: "I alone am a miserable sinner, doing nothing but evil." On another occasion he wrote: "I can assure

you, as I most certainly do before God, that no human motive would induce me to say this, but solely for the glory of God and His Church, because I am only a poor labourer and wretched sinner, nay, the most wretched in the whole world. I beg of you then to pay attention to what I say, if it seems conformable to the will of God." Once when relating the cruel martyrdom of an aged priest in England, he concluded by saying: "I tell you this by way of contrast to the attachment I have for my miserable carcass." Writing to a nun, he asks her prayers for "the most miserable and greatest sinner in the world." A distinguished prelate, seeing the extraordinary humility of our saint, could not help remarking that he was a perfect Christian. "O my lord," replied the saint, "a perfect Christian! People ought rather to regard me as a demon and the greatest sinner in the world."

Some one who had lately joined his Congregation speaking one day at a conference, expressed his great regret for profiting so little from the saint's wonderful example. Saint Vincent did not interrupt him, but, after the conference, gave him the following admonition in public: "Sir, we have the practice amongst us of never praising a person in his presence. It is true, sir, I am a wonder, but a wonder of wickedness, worse than the very demons. I am not exaggerating, but saying what I sincerely feel."

A priest of the Congregation wrote to Saint Vincent complaining that the Superior whom he had appointed was not sufficiently refined for the locality. The saint replied by a letter, in which he said many things in favour of the Superior, and concluded with these words: "And as to myself, what am I? How have I been tolerated so long, I who am so rude and dull among the

distinguished persons with whom I am brought into contact? I must seem to have no mind nor judgment, and, what is worse, to have nothing like the virtue of the Superior of whom you complain."

It was his custom, amid the honours and marks of respect shown to him at court and in the houses of the nobility, to recall his humble origin, saying that he was only the son of a peasant, and that in youth he had guarded his father's flocks. When we think of the aristocratic seventeenth century, a period when the peasantry were treated like beasts, as Labruyère says, we appreciate all the more the saint's humility.

A relative of one of the priests of his Congregation manifested, through respect, some hesitation to sit beside Saint Vincent. The saint, seeing this, quietly turned round and said: "Why, sir, have you any difficulty? I am only the son of a poor peasant."

"After paying a visit to a man of rank, the latter was about to conduct the saint downstairs, when he suddenly turned round and, among other things, said this to the gentleman: 'Do you not know, sir, that I am only the son of a poor peasant, and in my youth guarded flocks?' His host, who was a sensible man, replied that the great King David had done likewise. Saint Vincent became quite confused at so apt a retort to his humility."

It was the saint's delight to say that he had made but little studies, and always spoke of himself as a scholar of the fourth form. He never failed to dwell on this point when consulted by bishops. "Sir," said he to a vicar-general, "is it possible that you ask advice from the son of a poor labourer, one who has tended cattle, and who is still in ignorance and vice? I shall obey like the ass of old, through obedience, but only on condition that

you pay no regard to my opinion except it coincides with your own and that of others."

But that for which he humbled himself most was what he called the enormity of his sins. When undertaking any important work, he often went on his knees, in presence of his priests, and declared the greatest sins of his past life. They were greatly edified by such conduct, and admired the supernatural courage of their Superior in conquering that inclination to conceal one's faults which is natural to all men. Every year, on the anniversary of his baptism, he went on his knees before the community, asking pardon of God and of his confrères for all the faults he had committed. It was, however, not merely on that occasion, but on many others, that he humbled himself at the feet of the very least of his brethren.

"Thinking that he had reprimanded a lay-brother too harshly, he did not wish to celebrate mass till he had apologised. On going to the kitchen he could not find the brother, but he continued his search till he found him, and then most humbly apologised."

On one occasion he was travelling with three of his priests, and, to pass the time, he related something which had happened to himself years before. The priests were listening with the utmost attention, when suddenly the saint stopped and asked their pardon for such pride and vanity in speaking so much of himself. He then changed the conversation, and at the end of the journey again asked their pardon on his knees.

A very distinguished prelate having written to ask his advice on some important matters, this is how the saint began his reply: "Alas! my lord, what are you doing, communicating such important business to a poor, ignorant person like me, the most wretched crea-

ture before God and man, on account of my past and present sins? I am totally unworthy of the honour your humility confers upon me; nor should I attempt to speak, were it not that your lordship commands me."

But while he was thus humbling himself, his works eloquently sounded his praise. According as he advanced in years they became more fruitful, and yet he protested that he was nothing.

He declared that he was neither the originator nor the founder of these works, but rather an obstacle to them. Of Father Breton, one of his priests who had died, he wrote: "In losing Father Breton we lose a great deal, according to the world, but it seems to me that he will do more for us in heaven than he could have done on earth, and if it is the will of God that we should have an establishment in Rome, he will obtain it by his prayers, unless my sins prevent it."

The less Saint Vincent de Paul relied on himself, the more he relied upon God. He never would think of undertaking any work which he did not clearly see God had demanded of him. Even when this seemed evident he still waited, in the hope that some one more worthy than he might undertake the work. But when, after long prayer and mature deliberation, he felt that God required a certain work from him, then nothing could impede or trouble him. "It is the will of God," he would say, "and we have nothing to fear, except our own sins." When an important question was submitted to the Pope for decision, a matter that was to decide the fate of Saint-Lazare, the saint merely said, "I have nothing to fear but my own sins." Difficulties and objections only served to bring out into bolder relief his confidence in God. Sometimes it was money that was wanted, without which the houses would have to be closed;

sometimes it was pestilence that carried off the most distinguished members of his Congregation; another time it was the opposition of some lord or high person to the most evident and suitable scheme; yet under any or all of these trials the saint's constant expression was: "God alone, God alone; He will not abandon a work which was commenced in His name. It is not our work, it is His, and He will protect it." This holy peace and confidence in God were visible in his countenance and cheered his companions. He loved to refer to Abraham, the perfect model of confidence in God. "Remember this great patriarch," he used to say to his confrères, "to whom God had promised to people the earth through his son, and yet He ordered him to be sacrificed. Anybody might have said: If Abraham sacrifices his son, how can God fulfil His promise? Nevertheless, this holy man, accustomed to obey the will of God, promptly prepared for the sacrifice. It is for God to see to that; I shall fulfil His command, and He will accomplish His promise; how, I know not, but He is the All-Powerful. I shall offer Him the dearest thing I have in this world, since He wishes it. But it is my only son!—no matter. Again, in sacrificing him, shall I not deprive God of the means of keeping His word? God desires it; it must be done. But if I preserve him my race will be blessed; God has said so. Yes, but He has also said he must die. I shall obey, whatever happens, and hope in the promises of God. Admire, my confrères, this confidence in God. The patriarch has no fear, but is ready to sacrifice the dearest thing he possesses, and is confident that all will be well, for he relies on the word of God. Why, gentlemen, cannot we act in the same manner: leave all to God, and do as He commands?"

The better to show forth how much his labours were the work of God, he made no account of human means, so often sought after by other men. He not only disregarded them, but even despised them.

If persons offered to enter the Congregation, the saint's great fear was lest they might be too talented, and might not be able to efface themselves and live unknown. When offers of money, houses, or annuities were made, he seemed to make no account of them. What persuasion was necessary to induce him to accept Saint-Lazare! How many benefices he refused, and with what readiness he ceded anything that was disputed! He abhorred publicity as a means of success, and had confidence only in works founded amid silence, contempt and humiliation. Even the reputation of his Congregation and of the Sisters of Charity had to suffer in this way. One day a priest asked to be admitted into the Congregation, saying that he thought it was the best way to heaven. Saint Vincent replied: "It is your goodness, sir, that makes you say so, but the truth is, other Congregations are more holy; ours is the last of all." To another applicant his answer was: "What, sir! do you wish to become a missioner? We are only poor labourers."

When we seek amid such humility, such forgetfulness of self and such total abandonment to the holy will of God, what was the source, the foundation of virtue so heroic, we find it in his faith, at once so simple, so exalted and so invincible, that it never wavered. He had imbibed that faith with his mother's milk, but with what care had he cultivated it and with what courage he guarded it! Born towards the close of a century agitated by heresy, he grew up amid the most pernicious teachings, and from a motive of charity became the

friend of false leaders, yet his faith was never tarnished for an instant. Under their most insinuating influence he quietly pressed his hand over his heart and repeated his *Credo*. "As trees beaten by the wind and storm strike deeper root and gain strength from the tempest, so it would seem that God wished to perfect the faith of His servant by exposing him to trials and temptations, from which he emerged strengthened rather than enfeebled. The saint was often heard to say, that he thanked God for having preserved his faith in an age that had produced so many errors, and for having always given him grace to adhere to the teaching of the Church."

By degrees this spirit of faith governed all the powers of his soul, and lent a striking elevation to all his works. In every age there are to be found men of intellect and of heart, who are moved with pity at the sight of the misery among the poor. Their hunger and their rags appeal to them. But what is the highest ambition of such men? To open nurseries for children, asylums for the aged, or hospitals for the sick, and then they think all is done. But Saint Vincent de Paul founded more asylums and hospitals than they, and yet he felt he had done nothing.

On the other hand, some men, less occupied with the body than with the mind, have striven to raise the people from the darkness and ignorance in which they found them. But Saint Vincent excelled here also. He covered France with schools for the poor, and taught the daughters of the rich and noble to abandon home and pleasure to consecrate themselves to the education of their less fortunate brethren. But even all this was not enough for him, though it was the maximum for the so-called philanthropists. There was one step more, one higher aim, namely, to care, to teach, to guard the

immortal soul, and bring it safely back to Him from whom it came. To feed the body was good, to enlighten the mind was better, but above and before everything else in the eyes of Saint Vincent de Paul was to purify, to guard, to save the soul.

Even from this height he looked higher still, and saw clothed in the rags of the poor the person of his Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He used to say: "I must not judge poor peasants according to their exterior or according as they speak, for often they are far from what they seem. Let us judge them by the light of faith, and we shall see in them the Son of God who wished to be poor, who in His passion lost almost the appearance of a man, who appeared a fool to the Gentiles and a stumbling-block to the Jews." After all this, Saint Vincent regarded himself as the evangelist of the poor: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* "O God! how beautiful are the poor when we see them in the light of faith; while if we judge them according to this world, they seem, no doubt, despicable."

Such sentiments are far above those of mere philosophy and philanthropy. In truth, Saint Vincent lived in a higher sphere. His great mind was illumined by faith, and his great heart inflamed by charity. But even charity was not high enough. It was for him not an end, but a means. He gave to the poor to bring them to God; he cared the body to heal the soul. What touched his heart most deeply was not the sight of poverty and misery, but the sight of a world sullied by sin; of souls made to the image and likeness of God, yet losing all consciousness of the end of their creation. He was an apostle by his charity, serving God in serving souls, not out of philanthropy alone, but from a spirit of sanctity. To this exalted faith Saint Vincent added a

tender love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. It is here he rises above the mere philanthropist, for though he loved the poor, he loved still more Jesus Christ, their Lord and his. The thought of all our Saviour did for man by His incarnation and death transported him, and his joy was visible in his countenance, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal it. Often his eyes remained fixed for a long time on the crucifix, as if he were in an ecstasy. He grieved that he could not return love for love, and even when eighty-five years of age sighed to go and die a martyr for Jesus Christ in India. He often expressed a wish to go on the foreign mission, though he should die on the way. As it was, this man of eighty years might still be seen preaching, catechising and hearing confessions.

But it was in the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the mass that the liveliness of his faith and the depth of his love became most evident. If he met in the Gospel some words of our Saviour, he pronounced them in such a tender and affectionate tone as to move those that heard him. On more than one occasion persons who did not know him, on hearing his mass, exclaimed, "How devoutly that priest says mass; assuredly he must be a saint!" Others said he seemed like an angel at the altar.

His modesty was such that one would think that he saw Jesus Christ with the eyes of his body, and his whole comportment was so holy that it was capable of awakening the most dormant faith, and of inspiring the most tender devotion towards this august sacrament of the altar.

When in presence of the Blessed Sacrament he always knelt, and manifested the deepest humility. Jesus Christ was his book and his mirror in which he

viewed all things. When in doubt he had recourse to his Divine model, considering what He had said or done under similar circumstances, and that Saint Vincent faithfully imitated, heedless of his own judgment, of human respect and of the misconstruction his conduct might incur. "For," he used to say, "human prudence is often deceived and wanders from the right path; but the words of eternal wisdom are infallible, and its ways straight and secure."[1]

The love which Saint Vincent bore our Lord was never absent from him, but always animated his thoughts, words and actions. He constantly introduced into his conversation some word or maxim of the Son of God, so filled was he with His Spirit, and so faithful in following His example.

The love of Jesus Christ, the imitation of that Divine model, the union with Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, were the source of the saint's great sanctity and the only explanation of his great works. He might say with Saint Paul, "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me";[2] and hence it was Jesus Christ imparted to him the riches of His charity.

[1] Abelly. [2] Gal. ii. 20.

CHAPTER IV

CANONISATION OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

THIRTY-SEVEN years had elapsed since the children of Saint Vincent de Paul had deposited the mortal remains of their Father in the Church of Saint-Lazare, and yet no steps had been taken to place them on the altars of the Church. Neither Father Almeras nor Father Joly had done anything to obtain that honour which they knew he so well deserved; on the contrary, they manifested a prudent reserve.

In this they were worthy of all praise. An event, however, occurred which forced them from this line of action, and led to the first step towards the saint's canonisation. The humble priest, who had not worked miracles during life, was now beginning to do so after death. Around his tomb each day were thronging the sick, especially the sick poor of Paris, and each day brought new evidence of the saint's power in heaven. One of these miraculous cures caused more than usual commotion, for the recipient of the favour was Father Bonnet, a Priest of the Mission, and afterwards its Superior-General. It was now decided to approach Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, who was necessarily to be the first judge in such a case. A tribunal was at once formed, composed of the most eminent theologians in Paris, and they were appointed for the purpose of investigating the life, virtues and alleged miracles of the servant of God. For nine con-

secutive months, and in more than sixty sittings, two hundred witnesses were examined, all of whom had known the deceased. The beauty of their evidence made it all the more regrettable that the process had not been begun twenty years before, while so many other disciples and admirers of the saint were living.

While this tribunal was sitting in Paris, some distinguished ecclesiastics were sent through the provinces to examine persons who, because of their age or infirmity, could not come to Paris. In this way such abundant testimony to the exalted virtue of our saint was collected, that the cause of Saint Vincent's beatification is one of the grandest and richest on record. A full and authentic copy of the report was drawn up and sent to Rome, where it was again examined. It declared that no cultus had been offered, and thus there was no anticipation of the judgment of the Holy See. The Cardinal Archbishop came to inspect the tomb and whatever had belonged to our saint. He found everything revealing the respect in which he was held, but nothing to mark the honour that is paid to a canonised saint. The summary of this investigation was also sent to Rome, where it was examined by the learned Lambertini, afterwards Benedict XIV., who, finding no obstacle, recommended the introduction of the cause of beatification.

Meanwhile the sovereign pontiff was receiving supplications not only from France, but we may say from all Europe. Louis XIV., in a beautiful letter, added to his own testimony that of his father, Louis XIII., and of his mother, Anne of Austria. Among others who wrote were Leopold, Duke of Lorraine, the Duke of Tuscany, the Doge of Genoa, the King and Queen of Poland, and an immense number of French, Irish, Polish, Italian and Spanish prelates. The Pope was astonished, and

exclaimed one day as he was presented with a large packet of letters, "Oh, how marvellous, such a quantity of petitions!"

The French clergy wished to follow the example of their bishops, and prepared a solemn supplication to the sovereign pontiff, signed by the Archbishop of Paris. The citizens of the capital likewise wished to swell the chorus of admiration, and having drawn up a document containing their testimony to the holiness of the deceased, entrusted it to a deputation, which was sent to present it to the Pope.

Thus Paris, France, nay, Europe, turned towards the successor of Saint Peter, the infallible teacher of faith and morals, and with one voice exclaimed: "O Father, we have seen amongst us a man whose piety, charity, humility and marvellous good works have evoked our greatest admiration. Tell us—are we deceived; does not such a life deserve the honours of canonisation?"

Clement XI. received this petition with joy, and gave immediate orders that the ordinary process was to be begun, and witnesses to be procured and examined who were able to give evidence. Lambertini, the future Benedict XIV., assumed the rôle of devil's advocate, and displayed all his great learning and penetration in discharging the duties of that office. No objection, however, could lessen the reputation for sanctity of the servant of God; it was proof against every assailant.

After the process *in genere*, the process *ne pereant probationes*, which was to at once secure the testimony of aged or infirm witnesses, and finally the process *in specie*, in which more than fifty were examined, had been concluded, the next step, according to apostolic procedure, was to visit the tomb. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris came to Saint-Lazare, accompanied by the Bishops of

Saintes and Tulle, two sub-promoters of the faith, a medical doctor, a surgeon, and a number of the Priests of the Mission, including Father Bonnet, the Superior-General. A few brothers opened the tomb, and while they were doing so every heart beat with emotion, each one waiting to see in what condition the body should be found. Fifty years had passed since the burial, and yet the sacred remains were found quite intact. "When they opened the tomb," writes an eye-witness, "everything was the same as when deposited. The eyes and nose alone showed some decay. I counted eighteen teeth. The body was not moved, but those who approached saw at once that it was entire, and that the soutane was not in the least damaged by time. No offensive odour was discernible, and the doctors testified that the body could not be thus preserved for so long a time by any natural means." Of all who witnessed this ceremony, Father Bonnet, who had been cured at the tomb, was the person most moved and manifested most joy.

It now only remained to examine the writings of our saint, the rules which he gave to his Congregation and to the Sisters of Charity, his letters and the regulations for the different works he founded. This examination lasted many years, and when at length the zeal and talent of Lambertini could find no flaw, the solemn question was put: "Does it appear that the servant of God, Vincent de Paul, has practised all virtues, theological as well as cardinal, in an heroic degree?" The Congregation after five hours' deliberation unanimously replied in the affirmative.

Six days afterwards, September 22, 1727, Clement XI. ordered the decree to be made public, and thus Vincent de Paul was declared Venerable, after a process of inquiry which had lasted twenty-two years.

To be declared Venerable is only the beginning of the process of canonisation. To have practised virtue in an heroic degree is a great deal, and from it we may with certainty conclude that the servant of God is enjoying eternal glory, but something more is required before he can be raised upon the altars of the Church and receive public honour. It was necessary that miracles should be proved to have taken place after his death, which would show that he was of the chosen few whom God wishes the faithful to honour even on earth. These miracles were not wanting in the case of Saint Vincent, for sixty-four were ready at hand; but to avoid prolonged discussion, at first eight were chosen, and afterwards they were reduced to four, which were submitted for examination to the best theologians and medical doctors in Rome. This examination lasted over two years, after which the Pope being satisfied that no possible objection could any longer be brought against the miracles, declared Vincent de Paul Blessed, on July 14, 1729.

On August 21, five weeks afterwards, Rome was *en fête;* the vast basilica of Saint Peter's was thronged to witness the inauguration of the name of Vincent de Paul among the Blessed. A large painting of the servant of God, supported by four doctors of the Church, was placed near the chair of Saint Peter. Cardinals, princes, bishops and many distinguished personages came to be present at the solemn function. After High Mass the Archbishop intoned the *Te Deum,* and the mighty basilica echoed the blasts of the silver trumpets as the people repeated the invocation, "*Beate Vincenti, ora pro nobis.*"

The same evening, escorted by the Sacred College and a brilliant court, the Pope went in procession to

Saint Peter's. Here he was met by the children of Saint Vincent, and together with them knelt in prayer before the image of their Father.

The following year similar rejoicings were held in Paris. The celebration took place in Saint-Lazare, and was continued for three days. The Archbishop presided, and there too were the Priests of the Mission, the Sisters of Charity, the Ladies of the Assembly, poor from the hospital, and the foundlings, all united round the tomb to pay Blessed Vincent honour.

Our saint was not slow in showing his gratitude for all these honours, and the number of favours and miracles became so great, that the Archbishop appointed a commission composed of bishops, which examined in two years no less than one hundred and thirty-five witnesses. After a further investigation of the evidence of sanctity deduced from these repeated miracles, Clement XII. determined to add Blessed Vincent de Paul to the catalogue of saints. The Bull is dated June 16, 1737, and we give it in its entirety, for there is not a more beautiful panegyric of the saint, nor a more authentic résumé of his life and works.

BULL OF CANONISATION.

"CLEMENT, Bishop, Servant of the servants of God.

"For a perpetual remembrance.

"The heavenly Jerusalem, that city of the living God, wherein the Sovereign Father rewards all those who have laboured in His vineyard with the same recompense of everlasting life, possesses, nevertheless, different courts and palaces in which each one will have his place according to his deserts. This is why, to comfort the Apostles when saddened at the thought of Christ's approaching death, fearful at the sight of their own weakness, and anxious about their future reward, hearing it said that Peter, the most ardent and courageous of them all, he who had been established

their prince and leader, would thrice deny his Master before cock-crow, our Saviour consoled them, saying, 'In My Father's house there are many mansions.' By this He gave them to understand that none of them, in spite of their different strength and weakness, their greater or less sanctity, would be excluded from that happy kingdom, wherein there are many mansions, that is to say, different degrees of merit in the one eternal life. In truth, the sun, moon and stars have each their own splendour, and star differeth from star in glory. Again, the Gospel speaks of seeds of varying fruitfulness; for one seed produces a hundred-fold, another sixty, and another thirty: thus the martyrs bear fruit a hundred-fold, virgins sixty-fold, and the other saints each in their own degree.

"There are then different mansions in the kingdom of God; the stars have not the same glory; the produce of the seed is not the same, but is manifold. There is one crown for the time of persecution. Peace also has her crowns with which she crowns the victors who have subdued their adversaries in diverse encounters: to him who has vanquished voluptuousness she gives the palm of chastity; to him who has conquered anger and injustice, the diadem of patience; and to him who has despised wealth, the crown of the victor of avarice. It is the glory of faith to bear the evils of this world in the hope of future reward; and he whom prosperity does not render proud, obtains the glory of humility. He who is merciful towards the poor will be rewarded with eternal riches; while he who envieth not, but loves his brethren in sweetness and union, will be honoured with the recompense of peace and love. This path of virtue the blessed servant of God, Vincent de Paul, has not only traversed so as to receive these palms of victory and crowns of justice, but by his labours and example he has also led many others. For, like a valiant soldier of God, rising above the wickedness and sin which surrounded him, he took part in the contest that opened out before him, excelling others by his valour; and even to extreme old age fought bravely and faithfully against the princes, the powers and the masters of the world of darkness, and at last was worthy to be crowned by the hand of the Lord in the land of eternal bliss. Now God, who alone can accomplish great things, has not only rewarded His servant in heaven with eternal happi-

ness, but has also wished to render him glorious on earth by signs and miracles, and especially at a time when, in France, innovators, by false and fictitious miracles, are trying to spread their errors, to trouble the peace of the Catholic Church, and to separate the simple-minded from union with the Roman See.

"In obedience then to the divine will, to excite the faithful to run in the way of salvation, to repress the wickedness of the perverse and confound the malice of heretics, We have decreed to-day, by apostolic authority, that all the faithful committed to Our unworthy care, shall render to the servant of God, Vincent de Paul, the veneration and honour due to the saints. Let the Church, then, rejoice and be glad that God has given her this new patron, who will offer his prayers to the Lord for the sins of the world. Let all the faithful praise him, and pay him the honour by which God is glorified in His saints. Let us celebrate in psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles, in compunction of heart and charity towards the poor, the glorious victory and spiritual triumph of this servant of God over the world, the flesh and the devil. Let temples be built in his honour to the Immortal God; but let us who are the temples of the Holy Ghost fear to violate and sully ourselves by the stains of human perversity. Let us act in such a manner that nothing impure or profane shall enter into the temples of God, that is into our souls, lest in His anger He should abandon these temples wherein He dwells. In memory of Vincent, and on His altars, let gifts and presents be offered; but let us also offer our bodies as a living, holy oblation, pleasing to God, and as a testimony of our reasonable obedience. Lastly, let his statues and sacred images be the objects of honour and religious veneration; but above all, let us apply ourselves carefully, with the help of divine grace, to the task of copying and representing in ourselves, as far as each one's weakness will permit, his exalted virtue and holiness of life.

"Born of very poor but pious parents, in a hamlet called Ranquines, in the diocese of Dax, Vincent de Paul from his youth, like another Abel, tended his father's flocks in such a manner as to draw down on himself and his labours the blessing and grace of God. Living in innocence, he offered to God, by his savings and privations, an agreeable sacrifice of piety, for he

often divided amongst the poor the flour he used to bring home from the mill, and even the bread given him by his parents for his own modest sustenance. Thus he consecrated to virtue that which he took away from his own means of support, and fed the poor by his own abstinence and fasts. The burning charity of the pious child found no obstacle in his poverty, and though whatever he could spare from his own resources was very small, yet the greatness of his soul far surpassed the narrow limits of his means. Like that poor widow who merited the praise of our Lord for having given, not out of her abundance, but out of her poverty, so he once gave, to a poor man whom he met, a half-crown which he had slowly saved up, by his labour, thrift and daily economy.

"His father, having withdrawn him from a rural and pastoral life, sent him to Dax to be educated at a monastery of the fathers of the order of Saint Francis. Here he pursued his studies with so much care and diligence, with such purity of morals and love of God, that he was an example to his companions and an object of admiration to his masters. Afterwards at Toulouse, and subsequently at Saragossa, he assiduously applied himself to the study of theology. Chaste, humble and modest, such indeed as those should be who are called to the heritage of the Lord, he ascended through each ecclesiastical order to the sublime dignity of the priesthood.

"Scarcely had he been raised to this high dignity than his reputation for virtue and learning spread so rapidly that, in his absence and without his knowledge, he was nominated to a rich benefice. To this, however, he freely relinquished his claim, when he found he could not take possession of it without going to law; for he much preferred to suffer injustice and fraud than to take legal proceedings against a brother priest, and thus freely forfeited a rich income, which he could not obtain without one of those lawsuits that an ecclesiastic, as he himself used to say, should absolutely fly from.

"Nevertheless, that he might not be a burden to others, and that he might by honest toil and praiseworthy industry furnish means of support for himself and his mother, he taught the humanities in a country town called Buzet, in the diocese of Toulouse, and afterwards in that city itself. His great care and

anxiety was, not so much to give his young scholars a brilliant but wholly secular education, as to lead their souls to seek eagerly after heavenly wisdom, and to form their characters according to the virtuous principles and lofty sanctity of the Christian religion. Hence it was that gentlemen eagerly handed over their children to his care, in order that, in such a school of piety and under the guidance of a man of such high principle, they might advance in the way of the Lord and in the science of the saints.

"Having gone to Marseilles to collect a sum of money bequeathed to him as a legacy, he was returning by sea to Narbonne when he fell into the hands of the Turks, who slew the captain of the vessel, some of the passengers, and wounded Vincent with an arrow. They afterwards stripped him of his clothes, loaded him with chains and led him captive to Africa. He underwent many bitter sufferings from the cruelty of the Turks rather than abandon the law of the Lord, but he well knew that the sufferings of time bear no proportion to the glory that is to be revealed in us in eternity.

"It is related that seeing one of his fellow-slaves quite worn out by the heavy weight of his chains, and having no other means of relieving the misery of the unhappy victim, he loaded himself with his fetters, and thus relieved the sufferings of his companion at the cost of much bitter anguish to himself. The last of his masters (for he had three in the course of his captivity), a man of cruel disposition, employed him in the laborious work of the cultivation of the soil. Whilst thus engaged he was often visited by one of his master's wives, who, though born a Mahometan, was nevertheless most anxious to be instructed in the truths and precepts of the Christian religion. One day after much questioning on God and the Christian religion, she told him to sing her some of the songs of Sion, whereupon the servant of God began the psalm, 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Sion,' as well as other pious canticles. Now whilst the sacred song of the Lord thus sung by Vincent was re-echoing in the uncircumcised ears of the Mahometan woman, God touched her heart so as to let her taste some of the delights of heavenly sweetness. Accordingly, on her return home she sought her husband, who had abandoned the Christian faith to follow the ravings of Mahomet, and reproached him with having abjured

his religion, which appeared to her very beautiful, as much from its teachings, which she had gathered from her slave's words, as from the unusual pleasure she had experienced at the singing of the canticle, a pleasure so intense as that she did not hope to experience the like in the paradise of her fathers. Moved by the woman's words, the wretched apostate cast a glance on his fearful condition, deplored it, and, with the aid and advice of his holy slave Vincent, resolved to abandon it. Having put his affairs in order, he and Vincent escaped from the hands of the Turks in a small vessel, and fled to Avignon, in France, where Vincent presented him to the vice-legate of the Apostolic See, who, according to the sacred rites, imposed a penance on him and reconciled him to the Church.

"After this the servant of God betook himself to Rome, there to honour the sacred relics of the martyrs whose blood has purified a city, which, from being the seat of superstition, has become the mother and mistress of religion. He came, moreover, to prostrate himself at the tombs of the Apostles and to venerate the chair of Peter, the honour of which is preserved even in Us, his unworthy successor.

"On his return to France, following the advice of a man of eminent piety, Peter Bérulle, the founder of the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus, and afterwards Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, he undertook parochial work, at first in the diocese of Paris, and afterwards in that of Lyons. Here, whilst endeavouring with all his might to be the model of his flock, he guided the sheep that had been entrusted to him in the way of the Lord and strengthened them by his words and example. As the harvest indeed was great and the labourers few, he took into his house young ecclesiastics, whom he reared up and trained, living in community with them and instructing them in the law of God, so that in after years they might edify the Church of the Lord by the Divine Word and by salutary doctrine.

"The fame of Vincent's piety and the odour of his holy life having reached Saint Francis of Sales, the latter proposed him as director to the religious of the Visitation, for whom a convent had been recently erected in Paris. In this onerous charge, a watchful guardian of the holy servants of God, a prudent director of souls, he proved and manifested by his works the truth and

justice of the judgment of the holy Bishop, who openly avowed that he did not know a better priest than Vincent. For forty years the blessed servant of God guided these consecrated virgins along the way of salvation with a rare prudence, tact and watchfulness, so that they might, having renounced the concupiscence of the flesh and having been consecrated to God in body and soul, finish the good work begun in them, and by fidelity to the divine counsels, at length attain to the recompense promised by God to His faithful servants.

"The ardent charity of Vincent could not, however, be confined within the cloisters of a convent. Knowing well that there is no work more useful or excellent than the care and sanctification of souls, in order to wage a spiritual combat against the concupiscence of the flesh and the corruption of the world, against the pride and wickedness of the age, against the vice and misery of the sons of Adam, against the ignorance of the young—in a word, against the spirits of darkness—he laboured hard to form armies of devoted soldiers, who would fight the battles of the Lord. Thus it was that in 1625 he established the Congregation of Secular Priests of the Mission, who, despising and abandoning the delights of the world, joined together in the most pure and holy bonds of community life, and possessing nothing of their own, were to spend their lives in prayer, study and spiritual exercises. They were to labour to instruct the secular clergy in the knowledge of God, in ecclesiastical ceremonies, in the duties of the sacred ministry, and also to incite the laity to walk in the way of salvation by bringing before their minds the commandments of God and the truths of religion. They were to bind themselves to God, by a perpetual vow to spend themselves in the apostolic labours of the missions, particularly in towns, villages and rural districts where the light of gospel truth shines but rarely on men seated in darkness and in the shadow of death. Disturbed by no ambitious schemes, agitated by no perverse disposition of mind, and free from all petty jealousies, they were to lead a life of sweetest union, completely devoted to God and their neighbour's salvation, which must needs be an offering truly pleasing in the eyes of the Author of all good.

"Christian charity towards our neighbour, which flows from

the love of God as from its source, and rises through a series of wonderful gradations to the perfection of divine love, is not merely solicitous for the salvation of the soul, but also provides for the needs of the body. Hence it was that the servant of God, inflamed with perfect charity, sought to aid and comfort both soul and body, to save as far as possible the one and the other, making, however, the wants of the body subservient to the salvation of the soul, which was always the first object of his anxious care. The bowels of his pity being touched at the misery and sorrows of the unfortunate, especially of the poor and aged, of children and young girls who, not able by reason of their infirmity and weakness to aid themselves, and often deprived of necessary assistance, are accordingly bowed down under the weight of their miseries, he founded the Sisters of Charity, whose end is to work day and night in the service of the poor and afflicted.

"Furthermore, in every parish, not only in those of cities, but in those of towns and villages, he established ladies' associations to solace, by their tender care and watchful solicitude, the pains and anguish of the unfortunate; to procure spiritual and temporal remedies for the sick, means of help and relief for the distressed, money for the needy, clothing for the naked, and consolation for the afflicted. He laboured, moreover, to establish, preserve and extend in many places several communities of nuns, principally Sisters of the Cross, Sisters of Providence, and Sisters of Saint Genevieve, who spend their lives in training poor girls in employment suitable to their sex, and in teaching them the lessons of Christian morality, so that they may not when grown up fall into sin through ignorance of the laws of our Lord and the divine mysteries; or lest, being idly disposed, they neglect their home duties and fall into the snares of Satan; or finally, being unfitted for manual labour and overcome by domestic troubles and cares, they should be driven through want and misery to lives of vice and sin.

"Moreover, he built an asylum for lunatics, a house of correction for young men of depraved habits, and a spacious hospital for the maintenance and support of old and disabled workmen. Finally, owing to his strenuous exertions, two hospitals were built and endowed by royal bounty in Paris and

Marseilles, where the poor sick galley-slaves, hitherto thrown like beasts into dens, received every corporal and spiritual comfort.

"The remarkable uprightness and integrity of Vincent shone with daily increasing splendour the more he tried to conceal his virtue. He was appreciated by Louis XIII., of glorious memory, who in his lifetime made use of him to distribute his private alms, and asked his advice as to the nomination to episcopal sees and ecclesiastical benefices, and who at his death wished to be encouraged and consoled by Vincent in that last momentous struggle.

"After the death of this King, Anne of Austria, his wife, of glorious memory, Queen-Regent of France, summoned Vincent, in spite of his reluctance and unwillingness, to the Holy Council of Conscience. As for him, in the Louvre among the courtiers, at home among his disciples of the Mission, in public places among his fellow-citizens, in private houses among the needy and unfortunate, in hospitals among the aged and sick, in towns and villages among peasants and labourers, in the monasteries of consecrated virgins, in ecclesiastical assemblies, always and everywhere he fulfilled the duties of charity, spread the light of sanctity and diffused the good odour of Christ; for even in royal palaces, despising the vanity of the world and spurning its riches and honours, he ever kept his thoughts turned towards God and fixed on heavenly things. Hence, in the Council of Conscience it was always his chief care to propose the most worthy for parochial prebends, ecclesiastical dignities and benefices, which are the property of the poor and the patrimony of Christ.

"During his earthly pilgrimage, whilst he sojourned with those companions of his labours whom with himself he had wished to bind by vow, to teach the mysteries of the Catholic faith and the divine commandments to the poor country-people, as well as to labour in the education of the clergy and in other charitable works, being gifted with strength from on high, he ever showed himself a faithful servant, a courageous and indefatigable labourer in the vineyard of the Lord.

"Because he had made no efforts, like some, to attain to the superiorship of his disciples, but had rather been forced to accept it, he so acted as to embrace all in the bowels of the

most intimate charity. He took care that sadness should not cast down, nor worldly thoughts torment any of his disciples, and with the anxious care of a father he watched that this one should not be worn out through overwork, nor that one grow dull through excessive inaction; rousing the strong and restraining the over-zealous, he lightened the sweet yoke of Christ for all, and averted the snares of the devil. Uniting all in the bonds of a spiritual brotherhood and in the perfect charity of Christ, he exhorted them both by word and example to strive earnestly to acquire the Christian virtues.

"He who outstripped all by reason of his sanctity and the dignity of his position, placed himself below all in humble self-abasement. Often and in public he declared that he was a slothful and unprofitable servant, a peasant's son, formerly employed in tending sheep. In a general assembly he resigned the generalship of his Congregation, affirming in his humility that he was incapable of supporting its burden; he repeatedly asked that another should be put in his place, and it required the reiterated supplications of the whole assembly and a sort of holy violence to compel him to retain the office. The more he ascended the heights of sanctity by the knowledge and love of God, the more he lowered himself by the knowledge and contempt of himself. Hence he discharged the most menial duties of the house, and often, prostrate at the feet of his disciples and bathed in tears, begged their pardon for having scandalised them by his bad example. By his admirable works of piety and his eminent virtues he had acquired the highest favour at court; the Queen of France had the greatest esteem for him; the bishops, cardinals, all the highest dignitaries in Church and State, men of all ranks and conditions, held him in the greatest respect and honour. But the servant of God, humbling himself before the Author of all good, showed nothing in his words or actions that savoured of pride or vanity, arrogance or forwardness; for everything in him, regulated and disposed according to Christian discipline and evangelical holiness, clearly showed that there was nothing dark or hidden in the soul of him whose exterior shone with such resplendent virtues.

"When the evils of the time and the wild disorders of civil war had weakened the holiness of the French clergy by opening

a door to ignorance and corruption, every thought and effort of Vincent was directed to the restoration of the honour of God's house and the re-establishment of ecclesiastical discipline. To restore to the latter its full strength and vigour, which had been weakened by vice, he established religious houses intended to receive clerics who were destined to be promoted to sacred orders, so that they might there be instructed by himself, or his associates of the Mission, in the celebration of the sacred functions and in the formation of those holy dispositions which befit the dignity of their state. By this means the splendour of the sacred ceremonies as well as their due and reverential observance were restored to many churches in France.

"Furthermore, he brought priests together on fixed days to confer on sacred subjects and to exercise themselves in theological disputations, that thus they might learn how to preach sound doctrine and refute the errors of their opponents.

"Moses, before being placed by God at the head of the people of Israel, to deliver them from bondage, to lead them through the desert, to sacrifice to God upon the mountain, and to bring them into the land of promise, fled from the din of Pharaoh's court into solitude. Vincent taught this lesson to those clerics who, in the dry and barren land of this life, are destined to serve at the altar of the Lord, and to lead, by word and example, God's faithful people who are tending to their heavenly home, after shaking off the yoke of the evil one. He told them to withdraw from the tumult of the world into a holy retirement, before ascending through the ecclesiastical grades, that they might apply themselves for some days to meditation on divine things and to the consideration of the duties of their ministry.

"The servant of God, Vincent, was not only an excellent instructor of the ministers of the altar, he was also the model of a good and faithful administrator. He was the refuge of all in misery and want, sometimes even giving that which seemed necessary for himself or his missioners. He relieved all classes of destitute persons with such liberal alms that he was commonly called the Father of the Poor. Although advanced in years he bestowed the most painstaking care on the apostolic work

of the holy missions. Borne aloft on the wings of charity, overcoming every obstacle and the infirmity of old age, he hastened hither and thither to bear the light of Gospel truth and the knowledge of the divine commands to those who walked in darkness and in the shadow of death. He went especially to the poor inhabitants of country towns and villages, who, deprived of the light of Christian faith, and groping their way in the night of ignorance, were led back by him to the ways of the Lord. And as charity has no bounds, the virtue of the servant of God was not pent up within the limits of France; no, it spread and shone brightly in all directions. To propagate faith and devotion he sent evangelical workers from among his disciples, not only to Italy, Poland, Scotland and Ireland, but also to Barbary, to the Indies and to the most distant countries, in order that the zeal of his missionaries, when it had dispelled the darkness of idolatry, might lead those people to light and truth.

"In distant provinces, whilst seeking the salvation of souls, he did not neglect to provide for bodily needs, in order to win carnal men by temporal assistance. Lorraine, Champagne and Picardy, ravaged by war, pestilence and famine, were generously succoured by the sums of money he sent them, and which were distributed by the faithful ministry of the Sisters of Charity. Even in provinces still more distant he came to the relief of those afflicted by want and other calamities, and when the city of Paris itself suffered cruelly from scarcity of provisions, he fed in his house nearly two thousand poor.

"Although continually occupied with many and various matters of court, of his Congregation, of other establishments which he had founded, or those whose management had been confided to him, in all of which he rendered unwearied services for the glory of God, nevertheless he never repulsed any applicant, but supplied the needs of all, solaced the anguish of all, and embraced all in Jesus Christ. In truth, it was a wonderful thing that he refused no one access to him, that he lent a ready ear to all demands, that he answered with kindness and welcomed with sweetness, that he aroused the jealousy of none, but that, making himself all to all, he cared for the bodies of some, healed the souls of others, and according to the necessities of each, supplied some with money, food and clothing, others

with his doctrine and instructions. Thus he showed that if we do not owe all to all, to all at least we owe charity, and to none injustice. So far was he from avenging — and he could have easily done so—the injustices which he suffered from others, that he was never even heard to complain of them; nay, the humble sentiments he had of himself made him believe, whenever such injustices were done him, that he truly deserved them. He bore them with such patience that he asked pardon on his knees of those who insulted him, and when struck on one cheek he humbly presented the other.

"On one occasion some soldiers, blinded by rage and passion, after wounding a poor artisan, were pursuing him with drawn swords to kill him. Vincent shielded the man with his person, and put his life in manifest danger, that he might gain to God him whom he had snatched from the point of death, at the peril of his own life. The soldiers, astonished at such great and exceptional strength of soul, and softened by the words of the servant of God, quietly departed, leaving the poor man unhurt.

"But since the harvest of the Lord, of which We are labourers, though watered from on high by the grace of God, is protected by faith, tilled by fastings, sown by alms-deeds and rendered fruitful by prayer, Blessed Vincent did not neglect to bring the flesh under subjection to the spirit. Fearful lest the precious harvest should be lost, and that in the midst of thorns and briars there should spring up a crop not fit to be stored in the granaries of the Lord, but worthy only to be cast into the fire, he subdued his flesh by hair shirts, fasts and other penitential exercises, especially in times of calamities in France and the Catholic Church.

"If his advice were asked on any grave and important matter, or if any difficult or unusual undertaking were proposed to him, like the holy King David he consulted God before beginning, and humbly asked the Father of Lights to illumine his soul with the splendour of His brightness, that he might know what he was to answer or what he was to do. This being clearly seen and known, he begged God to prevent him with His divine grace, and to aid and strengthen him to bring the matter to a successful issue. Every time he left his room to appear in public, he prostrated himself before God, and by short but fervent prayers implored

the divine assistance, that whilst mixing with the world and treating of earthly things, which was so disagreeable to him, he might not be sullied with the ungodliness of the children of men. Scarcely had he returned home, than entering the secret recesses of his heart he subjected the most hidden movements of his conscience to examination, and in the midst of his conflicting thoughts, some accusing, others excusing, he carefully examined, zealously corrected and secretly punished any imprudent word that had escaped from his lips, or any inconsiderate act that he had done. Thus he was ever vigilant in keeping the ways of the Lord, who has commanded us to observe His precepts with the utmost fidelity.

"Devoted to assiduous prayer, neither men nor business, events prosperous or adverse, could turn him away from the contemplation of divine things. He had God always before his mind. Ever walking in the divine presence, by assiduous care and holy industry he had reached a state in which every creature recalled to his mind the Creator of all things, and manifesting the glory and praises of God, impelled him to the contemplation of heavenly beauty. Thus always recollected and gentle, affable and benign, preserving in all things an admirable equanimity, he was neither elated by success nor depressed by failure. Hence he could say with the prophet: 'I saw the Lord before me, and had Him ever in my presence; for He is on my right hand, that I be not disturbed.'

"Living so as to be able to offer daily the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, he never refrained from doing so. When, for some months before his death, he was unable to stand upright on account of the considerably increasing infirmity of his limbs, he assisted every day at the sacrifice of the mass. Comforted by the bread of angels, after an humble thanksgiving, he recited with deep feeling the usual prayers prescribed by the Church for those in their agony, as if he himself were soon to take flight from the prison of the body to his heavenly home.

"He was animated with a lively faith, and all his life was an intrepid defender and champion of it. When the tempest of heresy had sprung up in France, sweeping all things before it in its fury, the servant of God was sorely grieved at the sight of the faith of many being tainted with Jansenistic poison, at the sim-

plicity of those who had become the tools of crafty heretics, and at the great number of persons of all ranks who were led astray by these pernicious errors. Enkindled, then, with a holy zeal for God's glory, he believed it his duty to take up the weapons of faith against the common enemy, and seeking to please God rather than men, urged the sacred pastors of the Church to guard the flock of Jesus Christ and not to suffer the ravening wolves to prey in secret on their Master's sheep. Thus, by all the entreaties and exhortations in his power, he caused eighty-five French bishops, who were afterwards joined by others, to refer this insidious malady and secret spring of contagion to the chair of Peter, the culminating point of the Apostolate, to which all scandals and evils that spring up in the kingdom of God are to be referred, but more especially those that wound faith, so that there, where faith itself can suffer no weakening or decay, its losses may be repaired as soon as possible. Hence it was that the bishops of France, in their letters addressed to Our predecessor Innocent X., of happy memory, most humbly prayed and besought him to condemn with his apostolic voice those errors which were beginning to spring up, in order that the Church being re-established in her rules and confirmed by a decree whose proclamation was dreaded by the intriguers, every channel would be closed to those men who, furnished with perverse ambiguities and cunning sophistries, pretending to defend the Catholic faith and exhaling a deadly poison, were seeking to mislead and corrupt the hearts of well-meaning men, and to subvert the true doctrine relating to free-will, the grace of God and man's redemption by the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

"As soon as the answer came from Rome, Vincent received the decree of the successor of Saint Peter with heartfelt respect and submission. Rejoicing in the Lord that all discussion was closed by the judgment of the Apostolic See, he laboured with the utmost zeal to put an end to the error once for all. His first care and solicitude was to keep far removed from all the religious communities which he had either founded or was directing this hidden plague afflicting the Catholic religion, lest through the contagion of one infected member the healthiest should be corrupted. Moreover, as he knew it was a great and pious duty to find out the hiding-places of the wicked and there give battle to

the evil one, whom they indeed serve, with that apostolic liberty which so becomes a servant of God in matters of faith, he did not cease from exhorting the King, Queen and their ministers, not only to lead back the refractory to obedience by just punishments, but to drive forth from the kingdom of France as enemies of the public safety those who persisted in their errors. Thus the rigour of the secular power would unite with the mildness of the Church, which, content with ecclesiastical judgment and most averse to cruel retributions, is nevertheless aided by the stern enactments of Christian princes, since the rebellious sometimes have recourse to spiritual remedies through fear of corporal punishment.

"At last, full of years and of merits, having reached the eighty-fifth year of his age, worn out no less by age than by those corporal works that he, ever equally intent on pious enterprises and the salvation of souls, had joyously undertaken and courageously carried out even to his last breath, fortified with the sacraments of the Church, despising this world and eagerly longing for heaven, surrounded by his priests, who rendered to him the last rites of religion, answering the familiar words, 'Incline unto my aid, O God,' which they suggested to him, with the response, 'O Lord, make haste to help me,' filled with confidence, not in his own virtue, but in the divine succour, he peacefully passed away at Paris, in the house of Saint-Lazare, belonging to the Secular Priests of the Mission, on the fifth day before the kalends of October in the year 1660.

"After his death the fame of his sanctity spread far and wide. God Himself bore witness to it by many signs and miracles, and thus through His admirable providence the greatest veneration was excited around the remains of His servant. From this it was clearly seen in what honour God held that soul, since his now inanimate body so clearly revealed the presence of the Author of Life.

"On this account, and according to custom, two processes were instituted at Paris, by the authority of the ordinary, one to report on the reputation for sanctity of the deceased, his virtues and miracles, and the other to show that no cultus had hitherto been paid him. These processes having been begun by the permission of Our predecessor, Clement XI., of happy memory, and

their validity having been recognised by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on October 4, 1709, the commission for the introduction of the cause was signed. Having complied with all the formalities prescribed by the decrees of the Apostolic See in causes of this sort, the question of the evidence of his practice of the theological and cardinal virtues in an heroic degree was discussed. After the last general meeting of Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, who were members of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Our predecessor, Benedict XIII., of pious memory, ordered on September 21, 1727, the publication of the decree confirming the proof of his practice of the theological and cardinal virtues in an heroic degree.

"The examination of miracles was then proceeded with, and was concluded in three meetings, the last general meeting having been held on the twelfth day of the month of July, in the same year, at which the following four miracles were approved: First, the sudden cure of Claude Joseph Compion from blindness; second, the instantaneous restoration of speech and strength to Mary Anne l'Huillier, a child of eight years, dumb from her birth and unable to move her limbs; third, the instantaneous cure of Sister Mathurine Guérin of an inveterate and malignant ulcer in her leg; and fourth, the sudden cure of Alexandre-Philippe le Grand of an inveterate and long-standing paralysis.

"The same Benedict, Our predecessor, confirmed the decision of the said Congregation of Rites with regard to these miracles, and on August 13, 1729, approving the decree of the same Congregation of Rites declaring the solemn beatification of the servant of God, inscribed Vincent de Paul among the number of the Blessed, and granted by his apostolic authority that every year, in certain places, on the anniversary day of the death of the blessed servant of God, an office should be recited and the mass of a confessor non-pontiff celebrated in his name, according to the rubrics of the breviary and the Roman missal. He also decreed that the name of the same servant of God should be inserted amongst those of the saints that are read in the Roman martyrology, and he furthermore ordained the public recitation, at the second nocturn, of the proper lessons of the same Blessed Vincent, approved by the said Congregation of Rites, with the consent of the promoter of the faith.

"Remissorial and compulsorial letters having been drawn up by apostolic authority, for the completion of the usual process on the new miracles that had been wrought since the decree of the beatification of the same servant of God, and this process having been concluded, and its validity recognised after the usual meetings known as antepreparatory and preparatory, the examination of the miracles was handed over to Us who, by a disposition of the divine goodness, have succeeded Benedict XIII. in the sacred burden of the Apostolate. A general Congregation having been held in Our presence on January 30, 1736, after hearing the opinions of Our venerable brothers and imploring the divine assistance, on June 24 of the same year, We fully approved of two of the seven miracles which had been brought forward for examination, namely, the instantaneous cure of Mary Teresa de Saint Basile from putrid and inveterate ulcers combined with a long and obstinate retention of urine and an enormous dropsy; also the instantaneous cure of Francis Richer from a complete and inveterate hernia.

"When this was accomplished, and a general Congregation had been held in Our presence, it was proposed for deliberation whether the solemn canonisation of Blessed Vincent de Paul could be safely proceeded with, and Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, having given their unanimous consent to it, We solemnly pronounced the decree for the completion of the process.

"Several months afterwards We ordered, according to custom, a secret consistory to be convoked, wherein Our dear son Anthony Felix Zondanari, cardinal priest of the Church of Saint-Praxedes, in his own name and in that of the entire Congregation of Sacred Rites, declared in a report, first, that the writings, the process and all the acts of the cause had been carried out according to rule, and that they had the full force of authority and lawful proof. Then after a careful exposition of the life, virtues and miracles of the Blessed Vincent, he declared that he and the other cardinals of the said Congregation were unanimously of the opinion that the Blessed Vincent might, if it seemed good to us, be enrolled in the catalogue of the saints, an opinion which was shared by all the cardinals present.

"Wherefore in such a grave and holy affair, having omitted

absolutely none of the necessary precautions prescribed by custom and the rules of Our predecessors, We decreed that the cause might be advanced; and some days after, a public consistory was held, in which Our dear son Thomas Antamori, consistorial advocate of Our court, having spoken at length on the admirable charity of Blessed Vincent, the innocence of his life and his miracles, humbly begged Us in the name of Our dearest son in Jesus Christ, Louis, the most Christian King of France, and of Our dearest daughter in Jesus Christ, Mary, his wife, most Christian Queen of France, and in the name of all other Catholic princes, and of Our venerable brothers the archbishops, bishops and clergy of the kingdom of France, but above all, in the name of the entire Congregation of the Secular Priests of the Mission, to be pleased to enrol Blessed Vincent in the catalogue of the saints. We, therefore, considering the importance of such a step, and being of opinion that more mature deliberation with Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and the other archbishops and bishops, was necessary, ordered public prayers and fasts, and exhorted all the faithful of Christ to beg God, along with Us, to give Us His spirit of wisdom and knowledge, that We might learn those heavenly secrets which human wisdom cannot comprehend, and to enlighten the eyes of Our soul, that We might ascertain in so important a matter what We should decide so as to be in accordance with the divine will.

"We afterwards held a semi-public consistory, at which the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops then present at the Roman court, as well as Our protonotaries, to the number of twelve, and the auditors of the Sacred Apostolic Palace assisted by Our command. In their presence, having spoken at length on the eminent sanctity of the servant of God and the fame of his miracles; having again enumerated the petitions of Catholic princes, and above all, the ardent prayers of the Secular Priests of the Mission, We invited them all to manifest their opinions by free suffrage; and they, having given expression, in turn, to their firm convictions, answered with one voice, praising God, that Blessed Vincent should be ranked among the holy confessors. Seeing their general agreement, with the most heartfelt emotion We rejoiced in the Lord for their unanimity, because His name should be glorified in Blessed Vincent, and

because He moved Our hearts and enlightened Our minds to honour His faithful servant as much as mortal man can do. We then appointed the day for his canonisation, and We exhorted them to persevere in prayer and fasting to obtain for Us light and strength from on high to accomplish so great a work.

"Having therefore exactly complied with all that was required by the sacred constitutions and customs of the Roman Church, on this day, Most Holy Trinity Sunday, We proceeded to the sacred basilica of Saint John Lateran, which was appropriately decorated, accompanied by Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops; the prelates of the Roman court, Our officers and domestic staff, the secular and regular clergy, and a great concourse of people. Here Our dearly beloved son Neri Corsini, cardinal-deacon of the Holy Roman Church, Our nephew in the flesh, had once more repeated to Us by the same advocate, Thomas Antamori, the petitions for the decree of canonisation. Then after the chanting of the sacred prayers and litanies, and an humble prayer for the grace of the Holy Spirit: In honour of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, for the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the spread of the Christian religion, by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own; after mature deliberation and the repeated invocation of the divine assistance; with the advice and consent of Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, the patriarchs and holy bishops present in the city, We have decreed and defined that Blessed Vincent de Paul is a saint, and We have enrolled him in the catalogue of the saints as by the tenor of these presents We do now decree, define and enrol. We have, moreover, ordained and do ordain that all the faithful of Christ honour and venerate him as being truly a saint. We furthermore determine and decree that churches and altars be built and consecrated in his honour throughout the universe, wherein sacrifices may be offered to God; and that each year, on the nineteenth day of July, his memory be celebrated, with pious devotion, as a holy confessor non-pontiff.

"By the same authority We have remitted and mercifully do remit in the Lord, according to the accustomed form of the Church, to all the faithful of Christ who, being truly penitent

and having confessed, do visit every year, on the same day of his feast, the tomb wherein his body rests, seven years and seven quarantines of the temporal punishment enjoined on them or which may still be due to them for any reason whatsoever.

"These things having been done, We adored and praised God Almighty the Eternal Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ the King of Glory, the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, one only Lord and God. We solemnly chanted the sacred hymn *Te Deum*, and granted to all the faithful then present a plenary indulgence. Then on account of Our bodily infirmities, Our enfeebled health and Our advanced age, We withdrew from the aforesaid Lateran Basilica, leaving there Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, the archbishops, bishops and all the clergy and people, in presence of whom Our venerable brother, Thomas Rufo, cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, bishop of Palestrina, as senior cardinal present, by Our indult and permission, solemnly celebrated mass with a commemoration of the holy confessor, on the high altar of the said basilica.

"Now it behoves Us to return thanks and give glory to the Eternal God, who has blessed Our fellow-servant with every spiritual benediction, that he might be holy and immaculate in His sight. And since He has given him to Us as a shining light of His temple, in this night of Our sins and tribulations, let Us confidently draw near the throne of divine mercy, imploring, by word and deed, that Saint Vincent may aid the entire Christian world by his merits and example; that he may help it by his prayers and patronage, and that in time of wrath he may become our reconciliation.

"Furthermore, as it would be too difficult to transmit these original letters to each of those places where they are required, We desire that to their copies, even those printed, provided they be signed by a public notary and furnished with the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical authority, the same credence may be everywhere given as to these presents.

"No one therefore is permitted to violate this page of Our decree, inscription, mandate, statute, concession, bounty and good pleasure, or to temerariously contradict it. And if any one shall presume to attempt to do so, let him know that he will incur

the indignation of Almighty God and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

"Given at Rome, at Saint John Lateran's, in the year of the Incarnation of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven, the sixteenth day before the kalends of July, in the seventh year of Our pontificate.

"✠ CLEMENT,
"*Bishop of the Catholic Church.*"

CHAPTER V

THE RELICS OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL AND THEIR DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS

DURING the celebrations for the canonisation of Saint Vincent, the tomb was again opened, and the remains removed to be placed on the altar. Although in 1712, when it was opened for the first time, the air had entered and somewhat injured the body, and although God had not wished that His servant should enjoy the privilege of complete incorruption, yet this second opening was the occasion of no less consolation and enthusiasm. The sacred remains were enclosed in a beautifully wrought silver and gold coffin, and placed, with the greatest solemnity and rejoicing, above the high altar in the Chapel of Saint-Lazare. There they remained all during the eighteenth century, surrounded with suitable veneration, till the Revolution broke out. Who should have thought that the first outbursts of fury would have been directed against that house of Saint-Lazare, from which had come forth so many inventions of charity and devotedness, and where still two hundred poor were daily fed? But it is precisely such charity that is attacked. Where so much was given to the poor, it was argued, much should be found. It was therefore noised abroad that the granaries of Saint-Lazare were filled with all kinds of provisions, and on July 12 and 13, 1789, the eve of the destruction of the Bastille, two hundred brigands broke into the house. At

first they rushed to the vaults, and soon the whole building was inundated with half-drunken men, women and children, who respected nothing. The library was plundered, the archives thrown out of the windows, and the most precious objects broken and trampled upon. Then disappeared those priceless parchments the title-deeds and privileges of the Congregation of the Mission, together with thousands of the letters of Saint Vincent de Paul. Then, too, were lost his two portraits, the mattress on which he died, the candlestick used at his death, his walking-stick, and a number of other objects which had belonged to him, and which were preserved as relics. Fortunately the chapel escaped from the hands of the drunken mob. They either did not recognise it or they respected it, and thus it was that the sacred remains of our saint were left untouched in their gold and silver coffin resting over the high altar. But what even the people had respected, a greedy Government was not slow to carry off. Some years afterwards, 1792, agents of the Government came to Saint-Lazare and demanded all the objects of gold and silver which the chapel contained. It was thus necessary to deliver up the beautiful coffin with its sacred deposit, and for the time it was feared that the precious remains would be profaned and cast to the winds. But either through contempt, deeming it of little value, or urged by the dying embers of faith even in the heart of a Revolutionist, the commissary of the Government, after taking the gold and silver, consented to leave with the Priests of the Mission the remains of their holy founder. Fearing lest another attack should be made, they were immediately removed, and through the care of Father Daudet, Procurator-General of the Congregation, were placed with M. Clairet, notary of Saint-

Lazare, who kept them till 1795, when he returned them to the Priests of the Mission. About ten years later, July 18, 1806, Father Brunet, Vicar-General of the Congregation, transferred them to the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity, at that time in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, and when in 1815 the sisters took possession of their large house in the Rue du Bac, they placed the sacred remains under one of the altars of their chapel.

But they were not to remain there. These different translations were made without pomp or ceremony. It was reserved for Mgr. Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, to render to the great saint the most solemn homage. When the Priests of the Mission had left the ruins of Saint-Lazare, and taken up their residence in the Rue de Sèvres, they asked and obtained from the Archbishop that the body of their holy founder should be brought to their new home. His Grace consented, and made it known to the diocese in the following words:—

"These venerable remains were formerly preserved with due reverence in Saint-Lazare, which we may justly call the house of the priests and of the poor; for the former came there to be renewed in the spirit of their vocation, and the latter never sought there in vain for assistance in their numerous wants. There is not an aged priest nor a wearied pauper who has not prayed before that rich though modest tomb, where seemed to lie in tranquil sleep, amidst so many whom he had made happy, the true friend of God and man. But an ungrateful and destructive philanthropy disturbed this peace; it envied the handful of that metal which he had spent so lavishly, and with which filial devotion had embellished the last resting-place of a father so virtuous and so charitable. But of what value was the purest gold to his children in comparison with the least portion

of his precious remains? Abandoning to cupidity what it sought with an insatiable thirst, driven from their home and despoiled of their property, the Priests of the Mission felt they had lost nothing when they had saved their greatest treasure. Happy in having snatched it from profane hands, they confided it to the care of the Sisters of Charity, whose name is in itself his most beautiful panegyric.

"Surrounded with humble veneration in the seclusion of a seminary, where the charity of Saint Vincent daily brought forth faithful guardians of the foundling and heroic servants of the sick poor, the sacred deposit awaited that royal and public act of gratitude, joined to religious ceremony, which was to bear it in triumph to a new sanctuary, and to pay it solemn homage. By the boundless generosity of our King, a chapel has been erected and dedicated to the holy priest, not far from one of these hospices where religion had confided to the tenderest care the sick whom human skill had despaired of curing. There assemble each day, in a spirit of recollection and prayer, the generous children of Saint Vincent de Paul. There, under the eyes of his pious successors, come numerous levites, as of old, to receive in prayer the light of knowledge, constancy in zeal, and the strength and sweetness which give to evangelical labourers so great an authority, and which they have the good fortune of being able to contemplate so closely in one of the most perfect models. There the faithful come to learn with a glance what is due to divine worship, and the unfortunate, all that their hearts yearn for from priests so fervent. To this new sanctuary, under the eyes of priests and people, it is our intention to bear in triumph the mortal remains of 'the man of God,' who, passing through life doing good to

all, has satiated so many poor in Sion, and instructed so many priests to clothe themselves with salvation."

It was necessary, in the first place, to establish the identity of the remains, and this was done at the Archbishop's, on April 6, 1830. A commission, nominated by his Grace, took the greatest pains to inquire most minutely into their history since their first removal. The report of this commission having been read by the learned Abbé Tresvaux, the Archbishop was satisfied as to the identity, and ordered the coffin to be opened. With what emotion they gazed upon the venerable body! The doctors made a minute examination, but there was no doubt. It was the same body as the process-verbal, found in the coffin, described. Then it was that the veneration of all became evident. Clergy and people, but especially the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity, showed their devotion. The coffin was at once closed and sealed with the Archbishop's seal, till the precious remains could be enclosed in their new case.

That case is indeed splendid. "About six feet long and three feet wide, the arched top and three sides are of glass, and the whole case beautifully carved in silver. At each end, in front, stands a child, also in silver, and more than a foot high. The statues, representing orphans, have their hands joined, and their eyes are fixed with reverence on the relics of their benefactor. A statue of Saint Vincent, kneeling, and supported by a cloud, surmounts the case. He is represented as clad in his soutane and stole, with his eyes and hands raised towards heaven, while around are four angels holding the symbols of different virtues."

It was on April 23, 1830, in presence of Mgr. Quélen, that the body of Saint Vincent de Paul, clad in white

silk, with soutane and stole, was placed in this rich case. The countenance done in wax is a true representation, and in the hands is placed the crucifix said to be the one used by Saint Vincent at the death-bed of Louis XIII.

Everything being thus prepared, the next day, at the solemn sound of the bells of Notre-Dame, the sacred remains were transported, and an eloquent panegyric delivered by Abbé Mathieu, afterwards Archbishop of Besançon. On Sunday, April 25, the second Sunday after Easter, solemn High Mass was celebrated by Mgr. Lambruschini, Papal Nuncio, and in presence of twelve bishops. At two o'clock in the afternoon the immense procession started for Saint-Lazare, accompanied by an enthusiastic concourse of people. Thus was Saint Vincent borne in triumph through the streets of Paris, which he had enriched with so many and such noble institutes of charity.

The King, who had failed to be present at the procession, came the next day, together with the princes, princesses, and the whole court, to kneel before the sacred relics. For eight days pilgrims continued to arrive; all Paris was stirred. Not only neighbouring towns but distant cities sent deputations to honour the relics of our saint.

Since then all France has come around that tomb, drawn by the perfume of faith and charity which is radiated from it. What heart, indeed, will not turn in love towards him, who, in our time, has been such a benefactor of humanity, such a personation of charity?[1]

[1] Mgr. Bougaud's work ends here.

CHAPTER VI[1]

THE STABILITY AND EXTENSION OF THE WORKS OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL—HE IS DECLARED BY THE HOLY SEE, PATRON OF WORKS OF CHARITY IN FRANCE, AND AFTERWARDS OF THOSE OF THE WHOLE WORLD

THE men who are truly great are those whose works not only survive them, but whose works time, that destroyer of everything, only serves to strengthen and expand. The Congregation of the Mission, almost completely destroyed by the Revolution, rose from amidst its ruins, and to-day is more numerous and more widespread than in the eighteenth century.

The Sisters of Charity number more than twenty thousand, and are to be found all over the world. The Ladies of Charity have also multiplied, and there is no city, town, or village where ladies of the world may not be met who deem it an honour, after the example of the De Gondis, the D'Aiguillons and the Lamoignons, to seek out the garrets of the poor, to sweep their rooms and to make their beds. But the great work that has brought the name and influence of Vincent de Paul prominently forward is that of the conferences which bear his name. A mustard-seed in the beginning, to-day it is a great tree whose branches cover the earth. Where are there not to be met members of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in their holy and charitable conferences? They are

[1] The documents contained in this chapter have been borrowed from the *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission*, a publication of the Vincentian Fathers.

scattered over two hemispheres, and at present there are more than four thousand branches of this society devoted to the service of the poor.

Whilst all the works instituted by Saint Vincent de Paul have been developing and increasing, many others have sprung up modelled on his, for their founders knew well that they would never discover a more perfect ideal. They call themselves his children, and are animated with his spirit, so much so that Pope Leo XIII., seeing this multiplicity of charitable works all inspired by and modelled on those created by Saint Vincent de Paul, decided to honour him with a new and glorious title, that of Patron of Works of Charity.

How did this take place? Let us go back to the beginning and render homage to him who was, perhaps, the first to suggest the idea.

The Abbé Freppel, now Bishop of Angers, in the course of a panegyric preached on the 19th July 1858, in the Church of the Vincentians at Paris, said: "Four centuries prior to Saint Vincent de Paul, one of those men whom it pleases God to raise up from time to time, to manifest His designs, sees himself called to summarise the results of Christian thought from Saint Paul to Saint Augustine, and from Saint Augustine to his own time. Entrusted with such a mighty task, this wonderful man takes hold of everything within his reach, of whatever Christian tradition has bequeathed either of fact or idea; he gathers them together, he combines and co-ordinates them. He begins with reason, which he analyses and examines. He classifies natural truths, disposing them in a majestic peristyle surrounding the sacred edifice of truth; then entering within, he arranges in order the truths of revelation, like so many great columns resting their foundations on earth

and pointing towards heaven. He breathes the breath of God into these forms of intelligence, permeating and animating them. He raises aloft this dome of truth, supported by faith, adorned by charity, crowned by hope, until it becomes under his hands a master-work, an edifice like one of those noble monuments of the Middle Ages, rising from subterranean foundations till the pinnacles touch the clouds. You all know this man—Saint Thomas Aquinas; and never did human work manifest in a higher degree the genius of organisation than his theological Summa.

"Now, I maintain that Saint Vincent de Paul, in the seventeenth century, did for charity what, in the thirteenth, the angelic doctor did for faith. He has been, if I may use the expression which best conveys my idea—he has been the Saint Thomas Aquinas of charity. It is the characteristic of his work, the end of his mission. Yes, this man, so simple and so great, has been endowed by God with the genius of organisation, and, like Saint Thomas Aquinas, has likewise bequeathed to the Christian world his Summa, a magnificent Summa—the Summa of his works. He gathered into his own soul all that Catholic devotedness had ever furnished, from which he might learn how to relieve suffering and poverty; and completing the heritage of the past by broader views and new conceptions, he has transmitted to future generations that organisation of charity which the Catholic Church may justly claim as one of her greatest glories in modern times. Behold what has been the providential mission of this great man."[1]

Twenty-two years after the present Bishop of Angers pronounced these words, our great Pope Leo XIII., by

[1] Mgr. Freppel, vol. ii.

a brief dated 4th of August 1880, declared Saint Thomas Aquinas, Patron of the Schools. We may imagine what hopes were excited by this act in the hearts of the sons of Saint Vincent de Paul. Since Vincent de Paul has been for charity what Thomas Aquinas was for science, why should not an honour analogous to that received by the angelic doctor be decreed to the great organiser of charity in modern times? Why should Saint Vincent de Paul not be declared patron of all charitable works and institutions? Moreover, the attempted secularisation of these works seemed to demand that their supernatural and Christian character should be maintained by the solemn proclamation of an illustrious patron and perfect model. Again, in presence of the exceptional difficulties and necessities of the present day, those who support good works stand in need of being encouraged and spurred on. Many charitable institutions having no special patron would rejoice to be enrolled under the banner of Saint Vincent. Lastly, he may truly be regarded as the father of all those associations that have arisen in the Church mainly through the influence of his mind and heart.

Those sentiments being communicated to Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris, by the Superior-General of the Vincentians, the Cardinal at once replied to Fr. Fiat: "I shall make it my special care to ask of the Holy See the favour that you so legitimately desire; many great advantages would arise from it. The members of the conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul are about to celebrate in May the golden jubilee of their foundation. If this favour could be obtained before that time it would be a source of great encouragement for these gentlemen; their zeal would be strengthened and their numbers increased. God grant that it may be so."

The Archbishop set to work at once, and as a matter of prudence first consulted the Cardinal-Prefect of the Congregation of Rites. His reply was favourable, provided that the title asked should be confined to France.

Strengthened by this reply, Cardinal Guibert wrote to the French bishops to ask their support. He also sent them "a petition to be presented to the Pope," that they might affix their signatures thereto, if they thought proper. The petition was signed unanimously.

The Cardinal's Letter.

"PARIS, 28*th February* 1883.

"MY LORD,—Your lordship is aware that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is about to celebrate, in the opening days of next May, the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of this charitable institution, so well adapted to modern needs, and which is spread to-day throughout the entire world. A meeting of delegates of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in France and other countries will be held in Paris, to thank God for the protection He has been graciously pleased to afford it in the past, as well as to beg similar blessings for the future.

"Now I have been asked by some fervent Christians if it would be possible to obtain from the Holy See that Saint Vincent de Paul be declared patron, in the Church, of all works of charity, without prejudice to particular patrons, as Saint Thomas has been declared patron of all institutions of Catholic higher education.

"The idea seems to me, my lord, to be inspired by a sentiment of true piety; its realisation would aid very much in the propagation of the Society, and would give a fresh impetus to Christian charity, at a time when it is of the utmost importance to show the world that the Church alone can maintain union and brotherhood among men.

"Nevertheless, my lord, I thought it was my duty, before making any approach to the Holy See, to ascertain whether such a demand would be opportune. I have been assured in reply that a petition of this nature would be very favourably received and examined.

"But such a demand should not be presented by an individual bishop; it is but right that the bishops of the nation that had the honour of giving birth to Saint Vincent de Paul should express their sentiments and wishes to the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

"If you, my lord, share my views as to the opportuneness and the advantages of the privilege which Christian piety seeks for our great Saint Vincent de Paul, you will kindly affix your signature to the enclosed petition, and return it to me as soon as possible.

"Accept, my lord, the assurance of my most respectful and devoted regards.

"✠ Joseph Hippolyte Guibert,
"*Archbishop of Paris.*"

Petition of the French Bishops.

"Most Holy Father,—The fiftieth year has just opened since the lay society founded under the name and patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul was established in Paris.

"It is with sentiments of the liveliest gratitude and joy that all its members wish to solemnly celebrate this year of jubilee. Nothing is more fitting, for we see in Sacred Scripture how pleasing to God is this custom of men, in the evening of life uniting together after a period of fifty years, to return God solemn thanks for benefits received, as well as to excite themselves to make fresh efforts towards perfection.

"It is becoming that this most praiseworthy Society should honour God with exceptional testimonies of gratitude and joy, when it considers the admirable care Divine Providence has taken of it, from its humble origin to its present marvellous development. In the year 1833 eight young men conferred together on the advisableness of uniting, in order the better to preserve unsullied their Christian faith amidst the dangers that threatened society on all sides. They considered that the exercise of charity towards the poor would be a salutary means of safeguarding their faith.

"They held weekly meetings, called conferences, to deliberate on the means of relieving the misery of the poor whom they visited. At these conferences they made a collection among themselves, and concluded with prayer and pious reading.

"Now God, who ever looks with favour on the humble, beheld these young men animated with a truly Christian spirit, and it pleased His divine will to multiply them to such a degree, that the Gospel parable of the mustard-seed might well be applied to their association, for that little seed has become a great tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof. At the present day there are four thousand conferences of this Society of Saint Vincent de Paul scattered over Europe, Asia, America and other parts of the world.

"But the chief merit of its members is that they have ever shown themselves faithful to the true religious spirit which animated them in the beginning, so that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in our day has been, as it were, a nursery of great men, who in every grade of society, scorning human respect, lead lives conformable to the maxims of the Gospel.

"Considering these manifestations of the power and mercy of God, if we may so express our humble belief, we are of the opinion, Most Holy Father, that the Church would add a fresh splendour to her glory, and give a fresh proof of her power, if Your Holiness would be pleased to extend devotion to Saint Vincent de Paul, by solemnly declaring him patron of all associations and works of charity, without diminishing in the least the honour and dignity of special patrons.

"This, moreover, is not a thing that is new or without precedent in the Church. Has not Benedict XIII., of happy memory, given Saint Aloysius Gonzaga as the patron of youth in recognition of the merit of his innocence and piety? And two years have scarcely elapsed since Your Holiness declared, amidst the applause of the entire world, Saint Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, patron of Catholic higher and university education. Moreover, You expressed Your desire that under this title he should be everywhere honoured and taken as a model and guide.

"It is thus in a manner under the inspiration of the Church herself, and guided by her lights, that we address our petition to Your Holiness, begging You to decree Saint Vincent de Paul patron of all works of charity.

"We read in the Roman breviary for the 19th July, the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, these words, which are worthy of the

greatest consideration and attention: 'No misery was left unrelieved by Vincent's paternal heart—Christians groaning beneath the yoke of the Turk, foundlings, incorrigible young men, virgins whose virtue was imperilled, women fallen into evil ways, convicts condemned to the galleys, disabled and infirm artisans, even lunatics, and an immense multitude of poor, all were assisted by him. He opened charitable asylums that remain to this day, wherein they were received and nourished by his pious care. He established numerous associations to visit and succour the poor, amongst all of which the most remarkable are the celebrated Ladies' Association of Charity, and the community known as the Sisters of Charity, which is spread throughout the entire world.' Surely these words of the breviary are an admirable panegyric in praise of Saint Vincent de Paul.

"But are we not filled to-day with sentiments of still greater admiration, when we behold Saint Vincent, now dead for more than two hundred years, ever animating with his word and guiding with his counsel, if we may so speak, those who lovingly devote themselves to the fulfilment of these works of charity. The Priests of the Congregation of the Mission which he founded, walking faithfully in the footsteps of their Father, in the paths of humility and Christian simplicity, continue to zealously apply themselves to the evangelisation of the poor and the direction of charitable associations. The Ladies' Association, far from losing any of its primitive vigour, is a fountain in our midst, of the most abundant blessings. The Sisters of Charity fly in thousands to all quarters of the world. It would be true, perhaps, to say that God's promise to Abraham was a prophecy of the blessing He has bestowed on Saint Vincent, for he indeed has become the leader of a great people, and God is glorified in his name.

"Moreover, the illustrious family of the 'Father of the Poor' has linked to it a multitude of others in the shape of those societies which are honoured by the lustre of his name and which are vivified by his spirit. They are spread far and wide over the globe. They have given birth at Paris to the Congregation, already approved by the Holy See, of the priests and brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul, who principally devote their ministry of faith and charity to the needs of the working classes.

"Having piously considered and carefully examined before God all these motives, we, the bishops of France, confidently approach Your Holiness, to lay at Your feet our humble petition, that Saint Vincent de Paul be declared by Your supreme authority the patron of all charitable societies and works.

"The present time is fraught with peril; faith is everywhere assailed by error; the Church is the object of violence and treachery, and the corruption of the age threatens the complete destruction of Christian morality. We confidently hope that Saint Vincent will come to our aid; that the crowning of his memory with a new glory will be a lesson to all, as well to society as to individuals, that the only science of salvation lies in the knowledge of the one true God and His Son Jesus Christ whom He hath sent into the world. Saint Vincent, ever united to God, ever filled with sweetness for his fellow-men, ever simple, upright, humble and self-possessed, despising riches and honours, holding the delights of this world in horror, was never tired of repeating that he rejoiced in nothing except in Jesus Christ, whom he endeavoured to imitate in all his actions.

"Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, we beg Your apostolic benediction for ourselves, and for the clergy and people confided to our care."

The Superior-General of the Vincentians wrote to the Sovereign Pontiff at the same time:—

"Most Holy Father,—It has come to my knowledge that the right reverend and illustrious bishops of France, with His Eminence the right reverend Cardinal Guibert at their head, beseech Your Holiness to declare by Your supreme authority Saint Vincent de Paul patron of all charitable associations and works, without any prejudice whatsoever to the dignity and honour of special patrons.

"I, too, in spite of my unworthiness, approach Your Holiness, on the advice of the most eminent and reverend Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris, in the name of the bishops and vicars-apostolic of our Congregation, in the name of the members of the same Congregation of the Mission, and in that of the Sisters of Charity, whose filial love for their holy founder is

well known to me. As their representative I unite my most humble and respectful supplications that Your Holiness may deign to lend a favourable ear to our petition. I presume to present it to You after the example of the most illustrious and reverend bishops of France, and beg You to grant this new glory to Saint Vincent de Paul.

"Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, I beg Your apostolic benediction for myself and for the double family of Saint Vincent.

"I am, Your Holiness's most humble and devoted son,

"A. FIAT,
"*Superior-General.*

"*March* 1883."

The Jesuits and the Priests of the Foreign Missions—those two great families who are also engaged in the works of the Mission—supported the petition of the Vincentians.

Petition of the Very Reverend Father Beckx, General of the Jesuits, to the Sovereign Pontiff.

"MOST HOLY FATHER,—Saint Vincent de Paul seems to have been destined by God to be, in the evil days in which we live, the model and guide of charity towards the poor. He relieved all kinds of distress, and left, as zealous heirs of his spirit, his priests of the Congregation of the Mission and his society of Sisters of Charity, whose eulogium would here be superfluous, for the apostolic zeal of the former and the evangelical charity of the latter shine forth throughout the entire world.

"Even among the laity there are men who, filled with his spirit and confident in his protection, have undertaken admirable works for the relief of the poor and sick. The first place amongst such associations must be given to that known as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, which, though founded but half a century ago, is now spread all over the world, surpassing in its development the most sanguine expectations. It is a really salutary institution, preserving the faith of the rich by charity, and whilst supplying the poor with corporal nourishment, aches them to venerate and love the fatherly goodness

of God, reflected in a measure on earth by the rich and powerful. Moreover, it knits together the separated portions of the robe of Jesus Christ, by uniting the poor and rich with the now almost severed cords of brotherly union. Thus it renders an invaluable service even to civil society, whilst it adds a magnificent jewel to the Church's crown.

"It is therefore most just that the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul should celebrate with joy the fiftieth anniversary of their foundation: a joy well earned by these brave soldiers, who ask not for rest, but for the apostolic benediction as an incitement to still greater efforts. Hence they beg that triumphal honours may be conferred on their general, Saint Vincent de Paul, and that he may be declared patron of all charitable works and associations. They do not solicit a mere honorary title, one without value or utility; no, for their petition is fraught with meaning and comes at a most opportune moment.

"Whilst the enemies of the Church have commanders for each of their criminal cohorts, to whom they render homage, the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ should not be without leaders beneath whose standards they may bravely fight. Now the important point in this great fight that is being waged around us is the interests of the poor, and these interests will be either entirely compromised by open violence or they will be safeguarded by Christian charity.

"Urged on by the consideration of the immense utility that would accrue to the Catholic world if this petition were granted, and most eager to seize an opportunity of showing how much I am devoted to Saint Vincent de Paul and to his children, in my own name and in that of the most reverend vicars-apostolic who rule over the missions of the Society of Jesus in heathen lands, and whose interpreter I now become, I lay at the feet of Your Holiness my humble supplications, that You may be pleased to proclaim Saint Vincent de Paul patron of all charitable works and associations.

"Most humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, I beg to implore the apostolic benediction.

"Your Holiness's most humble and obedient son,

"PETER BECKX,
"*General of the Society of Jesus.*

"Given at Fiesole, *March* 27, 1883."

Petition of the Superior and Directors of the Foreign Mission in Paris.

"Most Holy Father,—The superior and directors of the Seminary of Foreign Missions at Paris, prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, and uniting their most humble prayers to the petition of the bishops of France, earnestly and humbly beseech, in the name of their entire Congregation, that Saint Vincent de Paul be declared by apostolic authority patron of all charitable societies and works. If Your Holiness will be pleased to look with favour on the expression of our wishes, and deem it opportune to grant this new patronage, the thirty bishops and seven hundred priests of our Congregation of the Foreign Missions, spread all over Eastern Asia, where they labour to propagate the Christian religion, will most joyfully welcome this new honour awarded to Saint Vincent. They will most gladly take care that all charitable associations in their provinces, founded in the past, or that may be founded in the future, will look up to and honour as their patron and protector this great saint whose heart was filled with the mercy of the Lord, and who zealously devoted his whole life to the maintenance and propagation of pious associations having for their object the relief of all kinds of corporal and spiritual infirmities.

"We beseech Almighty God, Most Holy Father, to preserve Your Holiness during a long and prosperous life, that You may watch over the flock of our Lord, and that He may at length, after these troubled times, grant to His Church a period of consolation and of peace."

Whilst these petitions were being examined in Rome, the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul were making preparations for their golden jubilee.

The bulletin of the Society thus reports the proceedings of May 8, 1883:—

"Long before eight o'clock the members were filling the choir of the Chapel of the Vincentians, where the tomb of Saint Vincent de Paul was opened, as it is on great festivals.

"At the appointed hour the Superior-General of the Vincentians ascended the altar and celebrated mass.

"All approached the holy table, and on the eve of separation they again wished to be joined together, by the participation of the same Eucharistic banquet, in a union of faith and zeal.

"Mass being over, the members of the general council and the presidents of superior councils paid their respects to the Superior-General. In the meantime, the members venerated the sacred remains of their holy patron, which had been exposed above the altar. They then withdrew to the hall of relics, where, besides the many souvenirs of Saint Vincent and other confessors of the faith, they were shown many beautiful and pious works of art.

"At two o'clock our members met in the great hall of the Catholic Institute, and the sitting was about to begin, when the announcement of the arrival of Cardinal Guibert produced the greatest surprise and pleasure. Everybody stood up and bowed with feelings of the deepest respect and emotion for the blessing of the venerable Cardinal. His Eminence, then addressing the meeting, spoke as follows :—

"'My dear friends, I have been asking myself how I could spend a few moments in your midst, on this happy occasion of the celebration of your golden jubilee. I was among you in the cathedral, and the sight of that great and solemn assembly afforded me the liveliest joy. There are very few assemblies of any kind, political, scientific, or literary, that could present such a sight as that which was witnessed last Sunday. Nevertheless, I said to myself: If I could only say a few words to them, if I could only pour forth the feelings of my heart! I could not do so in the vast Church of Notre-Dame, for I have not the strength and vigour I had forty years ago, when I first began to be engaged in the work of your Society.

"'On the other hand, I could not go to your reunions—to your banquets, for example. Cardinals, you know, are supposed to have spiritual bodies—(laughter).

"'I said to myself: Shall I allow all these gentlemen to depart without meeting them? There are some whom I have the happiness of meeting frequently; but the Belgians, the Swiss, the Italians, the Germans, the English-speaking delegates, it would

be a great pleasure for me to meet them even once. Now here I have at length the opportunity of gratifying my wish.

"'You have been informed that my venerable colleagues, the bishops of France, lately joined me in petitioning the Holy See to grant to your patron, Saint Vincent de Paul, the favour already accorded to Saint Thomas in another sphere, and to declare him patron of all French charitable works and associations. Before officially presenting our petition to the Holy See, I thought it would be well to know the Holy Father's opinion, for in Church matters one must not do anything rashly. I was anxious to know whether our petition might not seem to ask too much, or be at variance with that wisdom which is so characteristic of the Church.

"'In reply I was told that it would by no means be indiscreet to present it, especially if we confined our wishes to France. If there were other countries desiring to have Saint Vincent de Paul as the patron of their works, they could also petition.

"'I scarcely expected that the matter would be concluded so quickly, because petitions generally have to pass through many hands.'"

His Eminence then told the assembly that His Holiness, in his desire to please our Society, had summoned Cardinal Bartolini, and told him that it was not his intention to await the decisions of the meetings of the Congregation, but that he would himself, *proprio motu*, immediately determine on a report. His Eminence Cardinal Bartolini, on his side, hastened to do what was in his power with regard to the Holy Father's determination, so that the report might be issued whilst the members of the Society were still together. Cardinal Guibert then read a despatch he had received the previous evening:—

"Most Eminent and Reverend Lord,—I am most happy to be able to inform Your Eminence by telegram, that the Holy Father, without referring the matter to a special Congrega-

tion, but on the report made to Himself, has been graciously pleased to accede to the desire expressed in Your Lordship's petition and in that of the French bishops, by declaring that the illustrious benefactor of humanity, Saint Vincent de Paul, shall be recognised and venerated throughout the whole of France as the patron of all pious associations and works of Christian charity. I hasten to inform Your Eminence, in order that you may be able to announce to the delegates of the Society now assembled in Paris, the solemn act whereby the Holy See crowns with a new aureola of glory the hero of charity, the splendour of whose sanctity illumines France and the whole Catholic world. In a few days Your Eminence will receive the formal decree of the apostolic brief which His Holiness has ordered to be drawn up, so that the favour He has granted may be immediately carried into effect. . . .

"Your Eminence's most humble and devoted servant,

"✠ DOMINIC, CARDINAL BARTOLINI,

"*Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.*

"ROME, *3rd May* 1883."

It was not long before the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites was drawn up. The following is its tenor :—

Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites proclaiming Saint Vincent de Paul Patron of all Charitable Conferences and Societies established in France.

"Divine Providence gave Saint Vincent de Paul to the world as a noble model of mercy towards the poor, and as an illustrious leader destined to spread the works of Christian charity far and wide. For this end, making himself all to all, he excelled in doing good, and left his spirit as a heritage to his Priests of the Congregation of the Mission and to the Sisters of Charity.

"In later times a large number of the laity associating themselves with these priests and sisters, inspired with similar sentiments of benevolence, and strengthened by the courage of Saint Vincent, have fearlessly undertaken admirable works of mercy,

spiritual as well as corporal, without ever shrinking before fatigue, difficulties, or expense. Thus the Conference or Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, founded in Paris in the year 1833, has spread in a wonderful manner to almost all parts of the world where the Church has children, and has brought forth salutary fruits in abundance.

"It is for this reason that the members of this Society, intending to celebrate in the near future the fiftieth anniversary of their foundation, have expressed a desire that Saint Vincent, hitherto recognised by their own choice as their master and protector, should be decreed and proclaimed their heavenly patron by the authority of the Apostolic See. The most reverend bishops of France, entirely coinciding with this idea, have solicited the same favour from Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., in favour of all such charitable societies established in France. His Holiness, on the report of the undersigned secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, graciously receiving these prayers and petitions, has been pleased to decree and proclaim Saint Vincent de Paul special patron with God of all charitable societies in France that have any connection with him whatsoever; and he has consequently commanded that Apostolic Letters in the form of a brief should be drawn up on this subject.

"✠ Dominic, Cardinal Bartolini,

"*Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.*

"Laurence Salvati,

"*Secretary.*

"*April 26th*, 1883."

On the 22nd of June following a pontifical brief was published, solemnly conferring on Saint Vincent de Paul the title of patron of charitable societies in France.

BRIEF OF THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF.

"LEO XIII., Pope.

"For a perpetual remembrance.

"To glorify the name and implore the patronage of those Christian heroes whom the charity of Christ alone could beget, and whom the cold and heartless philosophy of the world could never produce, seems to us to be a most useful task. Urged by such illustrious examples, many noble souls have, at the expense of their own interests, generously devoted their lives to the service of their neighbour. Now among these heroes there is not one more beloved, not one who merits more from all classes of society than Saint Vincent de Paul. Hence it is with feelings of the deepest joy that We have learnt of the solemnities lately celebrated in his honour by Catholics assembled in Paris. Inspired by Christian faith, his ardent charity sent forth its rays to God, thence to be reflected on men; for being unable to give aught to God, who possesseth all good things in Himself, his charity spent itself on the poor, who are God's children. This is especially remarkable in the work established by him in Paris, and known under the name of the Institute of Charity.

"The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, electing to walk in his footsteps, while celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, presented to Us an humble petition to appoint as its patron Saint Vincent, whom it already has naturally regarded as its guide and protector. Our beloved sons the bishops of France have with a like eagerness presented a petition to the same effect. Wherefore in compliance with these wishes, and with the desire of exciting the devotion of the faithful towards this hero of charity, We hereby constitute and declare, by the tenor of these presents, Saint Vincent de Paul special patron with God of all charitable associations emanating from him in any manner whatsoever, and established on French territory.

"We furthermore decree that these letters be regarded as official and valid, henceforth obtaining full and complete effect, and that their authority be absolute now and for all time, notwithstanding all constitutions, decrees and other apostolic acts to the con-

trary. It is also Our will that fac-similes of these presents, even printed copies, signed by a public notary and furnished with the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, be accorded the same credence as these presents themselves.

"Given at Rome, near Saint Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, June 22nd, 1883, in the sixth year of Our pontificate.

For CARDINAL MERTEL,

A. TRINIHIERI (*Substitute*).

"Thus it is that God ever exalts the humble, and renders fruitful the labours of those who, knowing what they are, despise and contemn themselves. When He desires to arouse the sleeping world, unconscious of the dangers that threaten it, He calls not on the great, the powerful, or the rich; no, one poor aged priest suffices to manifest His designs. In order that His divine action may be yet more striking, He fills his soul with such sentiments of humility that he is ever fearful of himself; and it is only long afterwards, from the depths of his tomb transformed into an altar, that he can at length see the greatness, beauty and divine providence of the works that sprang from his mind and heart.

"How beautiful is the Church of France surrounded by her reformed clergy, the fruit of the seminaries, by her religious strengthened and ennobled by persecution, by her pure and courageous Sisters of Charity, and by that multitude of good works animated by the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul! What can avail against her? Persecute her priests! They will come forth ennobled from the furnace of tribulation. Shut up her hospitals and schools, banish her religious, expel her Sisters of Charity! Their absence eloquently proves their loss. O Father! bless them, and render them invincible by thy spirit."[1]

The pontifical brief declaring Saint Vincent de Paul

[1] Mgr. Bougaud.

patron of the charitable works and associations of France excited a universal desire of having this favour extended to other Catholic countries, and thus Ireland, the United States, Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland and Austria sought the same favour. The Spanish clergy, headed by Cardinal Moréno, Patriarch of the Indies, signed a petition for that end; Brazil and Central America re-echoed the cry of Europe and the United States; the Archbishops of Bahia and Quito, the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and of the Armenian Catholics likewise petitioned. We shall give a few letters, merely to show the unanimity of the movement:—

Letter of Monseigneur Azarian, Patriarch of Cilicia, to Father Fiat, Superior-General.

"CONSTANTINOPLE, *November 13th*, 1883.

"MOST REVEREND FATHER,—I have just received your esteemed communication of the 18th ult. I am happy to learn from you what I have already heard, namely, that our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., yielding to the petition of their lordships the bishops of your great country, has proclaimed the venerable Saint Vincent de Paul patron of all charitable works and institutions in France. In truth, these establishments work no less wonders in our Eastern countries than they do at home.

"I shall most willingly participate in the expression of this desire of the Catholic episcopate, and the fulfilment of my request will be a source of the greatest consolation both to myself and to my community in general, and this all the more on account of the long-established relations we have had with the children of this great saint, the true model of Christian charity and zeal for the propagation of the faith and the salvation of souls.

"Be pleased to accept my most respectful regards and best wishes, with my patriarchal blessing on yourself and your two families.

"I am, yours devotedly in our Lord Jesus Christ,

"✠ STEPHEN PETER AZARIAN,
"*Patriarch of Cilicia.*"

Letter of the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

"JERUSALEM, *November 28th*, 1883.

"MOST REVEREND FATHER.—I entirely concur in your views as to the opportuneness of extending to the entire Catholic world the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul over all charitable works, and shall be only too happy to do all in my power to obtain this most desirable favour. Yet I cannot but tell you the little I can do, seeing that I can give only one vote, as I have no suffragans. In my opinion this would be an excellent means of arriving at the desired end: first of all to collect the signatures of the bishops of some provinces or kingdoms; then let you yourself draw up a petition to be sent to bishops all over the Catholic world. I, for my part, shall be most happy to sign it. I am, moreover, thoroughly convinced that our Holy Father the Pope, at the sight of such a manifestation of the wishes of the Catholic episcopate, will be most happy to extend to the whole world the patronage of your saint over all charitable works. Be pleased to accept the assurance of my most respectful regards, and believe me to be, yours devotedly in our Lord,

"✠ VINCENT,"
"*Patriarch of Jerusalem.*"

Letter of the Archbishop of Quito.

"QUITO, *December 29th*, 1883.

"REVEREND FATHER,—The letter in which you inform me of the new honour with which the Holy See has just glorified Saint Vincent de Paul has been a source of the greatest consolation to me. As I am desirous of co-operating in extending throughout the world the glory of this great saint, whom we may well regard as the great organiser of charitable works, I have requested all the suffragan bishops of my province to kindly unite with me, so that we may with one voice present our heartfelt petitions to the Holy Father, to proclaim Saint Vincent de Paul universal patron of all charitable works and institutions at present in existence, or which may afterwards be established throughout the world.

"The Republic of Ecuador has already derived many precious advantages from the charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, by

the zealous labours of the Priests of the Mission in seminaries, and of the Sisters of Charity in the hospitals, hospices, schools, and orphanages confided to their care. I have not the slightest doubt, therefore, that all the bishops of the Equatorial Ecclesiastical Province will be most happy in uniting to petition the Holy See to add one more jewel to the brilliant and immortal crown of the Father and Patron of Charity.

"Be pleased to accept, Most Reverend Father, the expression of my sincere affection and good-will for the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity, together with the testimony of esteem and respect with which I have the honour to subscribe myself, Most Reverend Father,—Your devoted servant,

"✠ JOSEPH IGNATIUS,
"*Archbishop of Quito.*"

Letter of the Archbishop of Bahia.

"BAHIA (BRAZIL), *January 11th*, 1884.

"MOST REVEREND FATHER,—I received your letter of the 18th of October, and entirely agree with all that you say regarding Saint Vincent de Paul. Yes, Brazil too desires the favour of having Saint Vincent as patron of all its charitable works. My diocese, in particular, is much indebted to the admirable institutions of this great protector of suffering humanity. I am most happy to inform you that I have just now written to our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., on this subject.

"Kindly accept, Most Reverend Father, the expression of my entire devotedness in our Lord.—Your humble servant,

"✠ LOUIS,
"*Archbishop of Bahia.*"

Petition of the Irish Bishops.

"MOST HOLY FATHER,—We, the undersigned, the archbishops and bishops of Ireland, filled with veneration for the great Saint Vincent de Paul, justly styled the apostle of charity, and desiring to manifest our gratitude, in the first place, to his sons, the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, whom Saint Vincent himself first sent into Ireland under the auspices of

Your venerable predecessor Innocent X., and whose labours from that time until our own have not ceased to yield the most abundant fruits; in the second place, to his spiritual daughters, the Sisters of Charity; and lastly, to those lay associations which, under the name and patronage of this great saint, so effectually co-operate with the clergy for the corporal and spiritual relief and comfort of Christian peoples. Inspired, moreover, with an ardent desire of encouraging and extending, in these troubled times, not only amongst ourselves, but throughout the whole world, works of charity, the ornament and glory of the Catholic Church, we unite our most humble prayers and petitions to those already expressed by the bishops of France to Your Holiness, that it may please You to declare Saint Vincent de Paul patron of all charitable works and societies established throughout the Universal Church.

"Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, we humbly implore the apostolic benediction for ourselves, the clergy and people confided to our care.

"We are, Most Holy Father, Your most humble and devoted servants [the signatures follow].

It may well be imagined that Leo XIII. was not indifferent to these earnest entreaties, and on June 13, 1885, a circular of the Very Reverend Father Fiat announced to the two families of Saint Vincent, the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity, the new honour that had just been decreed to their glorious founder. On the report of Cardinal Laurenzi, the Sacred Congregation of Rites, by a decree dated April 16, 1885, declared Saint Vincent de Paul patron in the entire Catholic Church of all charitable associations directly or indirectly emanating from him. These documents pay too high a tribute to the virtues of Saint Vincent de Paul for us to omit them here.

URBIS ET ORBIS

Report made to the General Congregation, March 28, 1885, *on the Concession of the Patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul.*

"The favour that has been solicited by three hundred and ninety-three venerable bishops and prelates of the Holy Church and by five superiors-general of religious Congregations, namely, that Saint Vincent de Paul be declared universal patron of all Catholic works of charity that owe their origin to him, has already been granted for all French territory, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the *lay conferences or Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*, by the reigning Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., in a brief registered under the title, *Christianos heroas*, dated June 22, 1883. Again, by a decree of this Sacred Congregation of December 23, 1884, the same favour was granted to all the dioceses of Ireland.

"There is question now of extending this honour and patronage to the entire Catholic world.

"At first sight this objection might be made: why grant a universal patronage over all charitable works and establishments to a modern saint who has not been canonised more than a century and a half, seeing that the Catholic Church has venerated and venerates upon her altars so many other Christian heroes who, though more ancient, are not less illustrious and highly renowned for the practice of Christian charity, and who have rendered manifold services to religion and civil society, by their works during life, and even after their death, through their wise and beneficent institutions? To settle this difficulty, the undersigned is of opinion that without instituting any comparison between the saints, so numerous and so glorious, who have signalised themselves in the exercise of works of mercy, it will be sufficient to set down briefly the special and characteristic claims of the charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. These claims, which may be reduced to six, give a special and a quite distinctive character to his charity in the eyes of the Church and the world.

"We may point out, in the first place, that admirable art

which he bequeathed to his disciples, and which he impressed like a seal on all his institutions—the art of using corporal and exterior works of charity to gain souls to God, to purify them, and to elevate the moral tone and standard of society. '*Servus Dei*' (these are the words of Clement XII. in his Bull of Canonisation, *Superna Hierusalem*, dated June 16, 1737) '*perfecta ardens charitate . . . agebat quantum poterat ut proximus salvus corpore salvusque animo esset, ita tamen ut omnem corporum curam ad salutem animarum de qua potissima debet esse sollicitudo, referret.*'

"Secondly, we may point out the truly marvellous multiplicity of charitable works which he undertook and to which he devoted his life, ever keeping in mind this twofold end: to relieve his fellow-man in all sorts of temporal needs, that he might thus ameliorate his moral and religious well-being. The associations he founded or reformed are conspicuous in the annals of the Church for their lofty ends and their abundant fruits of salvation: the *Priests of the Mission*, destined for the education and reform of the clergy, as well as for the evangelisation of the poor, the ignorant, and the inhabitants of rural districts; the *Sisters of Charity*, to serve the sick, the poor, the foundlings, the aged—in fact, all classes of destitute persons; the *Ladies of Charity*, destined in cities to assist in hospitals, or in rural districts in the homes of the sick poor; the *Sisters of the Cross*, of *Divine Providence*, and of *Saint Genevieve*, for the education and training of poor girls, the protection of those in danger, and the care of abandoned females.

"The foundation of so many hospitals and asylums which he organised and firmly established with extraordinary rapidity, and which were intended for the reception of foundlings, slaves, lunatics, prisoners, penitents, sailors, wayfarers and disabled artisans, are truly marvellous works, and evoked this eulogium from the Church: '*Nullum fuit calamitatis genus cui paterne non occurerit;*' and in the Bull of Canonisation Clement XII. has well said: '*Dei servus Vincentuis erat veluti omnium egentium et miserorum perfugium, et cujusvis generis pauperes . . . ita largis sublevabat eleemosynis ut communiter pauperum pater nuncuparetur.*'

"Thirdly, another splendid characteristic of Saint Vincent de Paul is that he has not only been an active founder, but also an illustrious master and wise legislator in the administration of

charitable affairs, as well as in the art of directing corporal works of mercy to the salvation of souls. This is especially conspicuous in the prudent directions and advice he has laid down in the rules of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission and in those of the Sisters of Charity, as also in the judicious statutes and regulations by means of which he established or reformed many charitable asylums and establishments, especially in Paris.

"But this science of God combined with those eminent powers of administration were especially noteworthy and remarkable in his choice of means; for with singularly acute discernment he knew how to combat an unbelieving and corrupted world by those exterior and heroic works of Christian charity which the world itself, with all its philosophical philanthropy, could never produce. His heavenly wisdom and genius shone resplendent in discovering the secret of uniting and associating in the public exercise of charity, persons of the world of both sexes, and of employing all grades of society, by means of parish confraternities and many other pious associations, in spreading the benefits of Christian charity in all directions. It shines forth in those spiritual exercises and truly valuable instructions which he has furnished for the personal sanctification of all those who, under his banner, devote themselves to works of charity, in the midst of the world and in contact with evil persons, in such a manner that, before God, they have the merit of their works without being sullied by the wickedness of the world or the breath of vice.

"A fourth characteristic of the institutions of Saint Vincent is their wonderfully rapid propagation, so great that there is no country to-day, however unexplored or savage, where his name is not known, or where there has not been felt, through the agency of his courageous sons and noble-hearted daughters, the beneficial influence of Christian charity.

"In the fifth place, we find another characteristic glory of this great apostle of charity, in the fecundity of his spirit and its power of expansion. This splendid eulogy is to be found in the Bull of Canonisation: '*Et quoniam charitas mensuram non habet, servi Dei virtus Galliarum terminis restricta non est. . . . In remotis provinciis animarum salutem expetens, corporum etiam egestatibus consulere non omittebat, at per temporalia subsidia carnales homines*

ad Deum attraheret.' All institutions since his time that have devoted themselves to works of charity have been modelled according to his views and illustrious examples, and many put themselves at once under his guidance and heavenly patronage; for he has been in the eyes of all, the great model of a legislator and organiser of charitable works. It would be difficult to enumerate all the benevolent associations that have sprung from this rich and fruitful source, of which our age is so proud, and to which the Church's enemies are forced to pay the tribute of their admiration; for very often they are compelled, in times of danger and calamity, to appeal to their devotedness for services the most laborious and heroic. The Sisters Hospitallers of Charity, the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of Compassion, the Sisters of Saint Vincent, the Priests of Saint Vincent, the Brothers of Mercy have all flowed from this source.

"But we must here make special mention of the incomparable work of the lay conferences known as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Humble in its origin, it was founded in Paris in 1833, by the illustrious Ozanam. It has been warmly recommended and enriched with spiritual treasures by two Sovereign Pontiffs, Gregory XVI. and Pius IX.; and in a few years it has multiplied and spread so rapidly that it is to be found wherever there is a Catholic community, even in the most distant lands. Its valiant associates fill themselves with the spirit of their illustrious master, Saint Vincent; they learn from him his own characteristic science and art—how to spread far and wide the benefits of true Christian charity, how to introduce them into the homes and haunts of the afflicted, how to multiply them for the relief of all classes of the poor, and how to apply them so as to lead to the moral well-being of the recipient and of civil society itself. It cannot be doubted that it was upon this great model that those generous priests formed themselves who quite recently met at Paris in an ecclesiastical conference, under the name and patronage of Saint Vincent, with the object of entirely devoting themselves to the service and succour of the poor working classes, exposed to so many dangers at the present time.

"We may point out in the last place a very special quality (and one to be highly appreciated in our own days) of Saint Vincent's charity, viz., the salutary effect and preservative power

of its examples and institutions against the contagion of secret societies. It may even be said that it is not only an antidote against, but a powerful corrective of, the ravages caused by such societies. Accordingly we find these institutions mentioned expressly among the works recommended by the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., in his remarkable encyclical, *Human genus de secta massonum*, dated April 13, 1884.

"Finally, Christian charity, if practised according to the spirit of Saint Vincent, with a sweet simplicity, a tender affection for our neighbour, a generous liberality towards all sorts of misery and calamity, establishes a kindly relation between the classes and the masses, between the rich and the poor. Ever on the watch for the spiritual amelioration of those whom it assists, whilst providing them with temporal assistance, it soothes their wounds with the healing balm of religion, and by adding thereto the teaching of the Catechism, affords them the advantages of Christian practices with the fruits of brotherly love. Thus does Christian charity preserve the simple and ignorant from the traps and pitfalls of anti-religious and anti-social societies, and facilitates the return of those who have had the misfortune of being caught in their snares. The task is difficult; but in our days it is of the utmost necessity to oppose a barrier to the underhand dealings and conspiracies of those societies whose ultimate end is the complete overthrow of social and religious order. Now the numerous and flourishing associations that owe their origin to Saint Vincent de Paul are strenuously labouring with persevering industry at this important task, under the auspices and protection of his glorious patronage. These associations, by their fruitful works of charity, are in the eyes of the Church deserving of the highest praise and honour, since they afford a striking proof to the infidel, to the ignorant, and even to our bitterest enemies, of that divine virtue and superiority of the Catholic religion wherever it finds itself face to face with heterodox propagandas or free-thinking societies, however powerfully supported and richly endowed they may be.

"The petition addressed to the Holy Father, and supported by the signatures of so many illustrious prelates, the witnesses of and co-operators in the marvellous fruits produced throughout the Christian world by the institutions of Saint Vincent de Paul,

seems to the undersigned to have the most legitimate titles to a favourable reception; and this, first on account of the above-mentioned prerogatives, which are so remarkable in the works and associations of the illustrious apostle of charity; secondly, because it may lead to a still greater development and growth of these same works and pious associations; and finally, because it will serve to incite his generous sons and noble-hearted daughters to still greater efforts, so that all other associations that walk in his footsteps and under his heavenly patronage may zealously labour for the salvation of their neighbour against the corruption of the age, with as much benefit to souls as glory to the Catholic Church.

"These are the reasons that lead the undersigned to the opinion that if such be the pleasure of the Holy Assembly, they may reply to the petition according to the formula: '*Consulendum Sanctissimo pro gratia, si ita,*' &c.

"CHARLES, CARDINAL LAURENZI."

Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

ORBIS.

"Ever desirous of enkindling the zeal of the faithful for those works of Christian charity that owe their origin to Saint Vincent de Paul, and wishing to augment the glory of such an illustrious Father and Master; yielding, moreover, to the prayers addressed to him, two years ago, by the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul on the occasion of its golden jubilee in Paris, as also to the wishes of the right reverend bishops of France, the Sovereign Pontiff, by virtue of his apostolic authority, declared and constituted Saint Vincent de Paul special patron with God of all charitable associations in France owing their origin to him in any manner whatsoever.

"Many cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, as well as a great number of venerable bishops from all parts of the world, and several superiors-general of religious Congregations, presented their earnest petitions to the Sovereign Pontiff that the decree granted last year to the dioceses of Ireland should now be extended to all societies and works of the same nature throughout

the entire Catholic world. Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., received them favourably, and transmitted them to the right reverend and eminent cardinals of the Congregation of Rites, that they might give him their advice on the question. Now this Sacred Congregation, at an ordinary meeting held in the Vatican, March 28, 1885, on the report of the Right Reverend and Eminent Cardinal, Charles Laurenzi, and having also heard attentively the Reverend Father Dom Augustin Caprara, promoter of the holy faith, when everything had been maturely examined, replied to the petition of so many illustrious prelates: *Consulendum Sanctissimo pro gratia.* A faithful account of all these proceedings having been laid before our Holy Father by the undersigned secretary, His Holiness was pleased to entirely confirm and approve the decision of the Sacred Congregation. He furthermore declared and constituted, with all the honours due to heavenly protectors, Saint Vincent de Paul special patron with God of all charitable associations existing throughout the Catholic world, and which emanate from him in any manner whatsoever; and ordered apostolic letters to be prepared in the form of a brief.

"D. Cardinal Bartolini,

"*Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.*

"*April* 10*th of the same year*, 1885.

(✠ Seal).

"Lawrence Salvati,

"*Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.*

"Office of the Secretary
of Briefs, *May 2nd*, 1885."

BRIEF OF LEO XIII., POPE.

"For perpetual remembrance.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ gave many commandments to the human race, that by their observance men might be led in safety unto life eternal; but there was one which He often repeated, and on which He ever insisted, that of loving our neighbour as ourselves. He, who is charity itself, taught us that charity is the foundation whereon the whole law rests, and a sign whereby the disciples of Christian wisdom might be distinguished from other men. It is no wonder then that the noble virtue of preferring

others to ourselves, the mother and nurse of all other virtues, should be found deep in the hearts of those who, walking in the footsteps of their Divine Master, have striven to reach the summit of Christian perfection. In the foremost rank of these, by the lustre of his virtue, stands out Saint Vincent de Paul, the great and immortal model of Christian charity. He left no misery unassuaged by his marvellous charity; he embraced every labour for the relief and advantage of his fellow-men.

"When Vincent had departed this life to ascend into heaven, the source of the works instituted by him was by no means dried up. It still flows freely and abundantly, in numerous channels, to water the fields of the Church. For this most holy man not only strenuously exerted himself in the practice of charity, but induced very many to imitate him. Some he formed to the practices of a religious life under a common rule, whilst others he enrolled in pious associations to which he gave the most prudent counsel and direction. The abundant fruits that society receives from them may easily be seen; for his Congregations, though not yet two centuries in existence, are spread throughout almost all parts of the world, and everywhere excite that admiration which is so justly due to them. It is well known that Saint Vincent's disciples are ever ready to comfort the afflicted; that they are to be met with everywhere, in hospitals, prisons, schools, nay, even on the battlefield, ever fulfilling the duties of charity towards body and soul. Hence it is that Our predecessors have ever honoured and regarded with feelings of special tenderness the Congregations and Associations of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well as all those other charitable societies which, without bearing his name, have nevertheless sprung from him as from their source. Following their example, in Our desire that all those associations might drink more deeply of the spirit of their founder and father, and especially at the request of the bishops of France, we have already declared and constituted Saint Vincent de Paul heavenly patron of the above-mentioned societies existing in France. This decree was last year extended to the dioceses of Ireland at the pious request of their bishops.

"Finally, many cardinals of the Holy Roman Church and bishops from almost all parts of the world, as well as the superiors-general of religious Congregations, have begged Us to

graciously extend this decree to all those Catholic countries in which societies and works of the same nature are to be found. After having taken the advice of the cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, We have decided to lend a favourable ear to these petitions.

"Wherefore, desirous of contributing to the welfare of the Universal Church, of augmenting the glory of God, and exciting in all hearts zeal and charity towards the neighbour, We, by virtue of Our apostolic authority, declare and constitute by these letters, Saint Vincent de Paul special patron with God of all charitable associations existing throughout the Catholic world and emanating from him in any way whatsoever, and We decree that all the honours due to heavenly patrons be rendered to him.

"We furthermore decree that these presents are and shall be considered efficient, valid and authentic, henceforth obtaining their full and entire effect, and that their authority be absolute for the present and for the future, and this notwithstanding all constitutions, decrees, or other apostolic acts to the contrary. We moreover desire that copies of these presents, provided they be sealed by an ecclesiastical dignitary, obtain the same credence as that accorded to the original.

"Given at Rome, near Saint Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, May 12th, 1885, the eighth year of Our pontificate.

(L. ✠ S.) "M. CARDINAL LEDOCKOWSKI.

We may imagine what enthusiasm these new honours accorded to Saint Vincent aroused in all hearts. The whole world once more rejoiced in the glory of the saint. Triduums were celebrated in Rome, Paris, in the East, and in America. The details of them would be full of consolation, but we must finish.

As we lay down our pen we exclaim from the depths of our heart: "*Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis*—God is wonderful in His saints." He raises them up and glorifies them when and where He pleases. He raised up Vincent de Paul in the seventeenth century after doctrinal science had played its part in the battle

against the Reformation, to give another proof of the divinity of His Church, by showing that wherever Truth is, there too is Charity. He glorifies him at the present day in a wonderful manner, because though it is no doubt by science, yet it is above all by works that, in our times especially, the Church is to reconquer the world. Nowadays, when everything, even charity itself, is being secularised, it is necessary to show by this striking and glorious example that nothing equals the love that draws its inspirations from the depths of the Sacred Heart of Love itself made man, and that no philanthropist will ever equal the disciple of Jesus Christ, who is both a philanthropist and a saint.

Of what avail, however, is our applause if our works contradict our words? Of what advantage to hold up a model, the greatest the world has ever seen, if, content with barren admiration, we proceed no further; if the name and example of Saint Vincent de Paul enkindle not in our hearts the sacred flame that consumed his own? Let us honour the saints; yes, but still more let us imitate them.

Let us follow in the footprints of Saint Vincent de Paul. Let us devote ourselves, like him, to works of charity in the service of our neighbour. There it is that we shall find our greatest source of strength in the conflicts of the present day. What have the so-called philanthropists that we have not? We have, on the contrary, what they shall never have, the divine charity of Jesus Christ. Let us prove that, instead of dividing or opposing the powers of the human soul, we are to unite them for the regeneration of modern society; that the Church, far from being a hindrance, is an indispensable auxiliary of progress; and that it is now time for this benighted age to recognise that fact and

return to her fold. Then shall those who are being led astray come to know where are their true friends—those who wish not to use them as tools, but to serve them for Christ's sake. Here is to be found the solution not only of the religious, but of the social problem of our day.

Men resist learning, eloquence, genius; they yield before the works of charity, before the sweet influences of love.

E. P. M. M.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX[1]

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PROVINCES OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION AND OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

Irish Province of the Congregation of the Mission

Though Saint Vincent's missionaries were sent to Ireland in the seventeenth century by Saint Vincent himself, at the request of His Holiness Innocent the Tenth, and laboured there during six years, they returned in the end to the Centre House at Paris. In 1798, at the opening of Maynooth College, an Irish priest, Father Edward Ferris, a member of Saint Vincent's Congregation of the Mission, and one of the Assistants of the Superior-General, was appointed there, at the request of the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Reverend Dr. Troy, and by the permission of the Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission, to the office of first Dean, and in 1801 to the chair of Moral Theology; but he, having during eleven years aided in the establishing and formation of the infant College of Maynooth, sank under his labours and his years, and died on the 26th November 1809. He was buried in Laragh Bryan, a graveyard near the College, but seventy years afterwards his remains were removed to Castleknock to repose among his kindred ashes. It is credibly stated that his copy of the Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, found after his death, suggested the beginnings of its foundation in Ireland.

In the year 1833, in the College of Maynooth, four priests just ordained, Fathers James Lynch, Peter Kenrick, Antony Reynolds and Michael Burke, formed the idea of living in community, and labouring, like Saint Vincent de Paul, in the vineyard of the Church. Another young priest of similar standing

[1] In the Appendix, I am indebted to the Very Rev. M. O'Callaghan, C.M. (Cork), and the Very Rev. R. Lennon, C.M. (Emmitsburg, U.S.).—Transl.

in the College soon associated himself to them—Father Thomas McNamara. They placed themselves in the hands of the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Reverend Dr. Murray, proposing to begin their work by opening a college in the Diocese of Dublin, which they accordingly did. Father John McCann presented the means of purchasing the present site of Saint Vincent's, Castleknock. Father Philip Dowley, just appointed Vice-President of Maynooth, at their earnest solicitations placed himself at their head. Their ranks were soon thinned. Father Peter Kenrick, afterwards Archbishop of Saint-Louis, left for the United States, and Father Antony Reynolds got into delicate health and died a saintly death.

Though Castleknock College was opened in 1835, and the little church of Phibsborough, in the suburbs of Dublin, was placed in 1838 in their hands by the Archbishop of Dublin, Father Dowley and his companions did not seem to realise to themselves that the institute for which they were sighing and which they were struggling to found, already existed, had its headquarters in Paris, and was spread throughout the world. Their attention was called to this fact by one of the Professors of the Irish College, Paris, Father O'Toole, who paid them a visit at Castleknock in 1838, and subsequently waited on the Superior-General, Father Nozo, in Paris, to explain the views and wishes of the new Irish Community, and its desire to be connected with Saint Vincent's Congregation of the Mission, and its willingness to adopt the necessary means for that purpose.

Father Dowley and Father Roger Kickham, who had from an early period joined the little Maynooth band, were called to Paris to make their novitiate, and in 1839 Father Girard, a distinguished member of the Congregation, was sent by the Superior-General to reside in Castleknock and form the Irish confrères.

In 1840, at the close of the gifted and saintly Father Girard's visit, the Community consisted of Father Dowley, Superior; Father McCann, Procurator, though only aggregated to the body as a benefactor; Father Lynch; Father Burke; Father Kelly; while Father McNamara resided in a little house attached to the Church of Saint Peter's, Phibsborough. Father Hand, who joined early, left the Community to found the College of All Hallows at Drumcondra, for the training of priests for the foreign missions; and Father Scully continued for a few years as an attaché on

the professorial staff at Castleknock. Add to these a couple of cleric-postulants and one or two postulant lay-brothers, and you have the entire of Saint Vincent's Community in Ireland. Castleknock had accommodation for about fifty students, and Phibsborough Church held four or five hundred persons. This was the little grain of mustard-seed hidden in the bosom of God's providence in 1840.

Soon the tree grew and in itself and in its many branches its fruits abounded, and its shade was sought by Celt and Saxon in Ireland, England, Scotland and Australia.

Annexed is a tabulated summary of the houses of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Mission :—

PROVINCE OF IRELAND. CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION. 1898.

Total Personnel—92 Priests, 10 Students, 16 Seminarists and 35 Lay-Brothers.

Houses.	Diocese.	Work.	Founded.
St. Joseph's, Blackrock .	Dublin	Novitiate and studies	1873
St. Vincent's, Castleknock	Dublin	College	1839
St. Peter's, Phibsborough .	Dublin	Missions	1839
St. Vincent's, Cork. . .	Cork	Missions	1847
St. Vincent's, Sheffield .	Leeds	Parish and missions	1853
Irish College, Paris. . .	Paris	College	1858
St. Mary's, Lanark . . .	Glasgow	Parish and missions	1859
St. Patrick's, Armagh . .	Armagh	College	1861
St. Patrick's, Drumcondra	Dublin	College	1875
St. Vincent's, Ashfield .	Sydney	Parish and missions	1885
St. Stanislaus', Bathurst .	Bathurst	College	1888
St. Vincent's, Mill Hill .	Westminster	Parish	1889
St. Joseph's, Malvern . .	Melbourne	Parish and missions	1892
All Hallows, Drumcondra	Dublin	College	1892

English Province of the Sisters of Charity.

The introduction into these countries of the missionaries of Saint Vincent prepared the way for the coming also of his second family, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. In the course of the missions a considerable number of pious young girls presented themselves, feeling inspired to join the Community of the sisters. At the recommendation of the missionaries, they

were gladly received into the mother-house of the Community at Paris. Having completed their novitiate, they were scattered in various countries where the sisters then had houses, and were trained in the various works of the institute. Thus, when it entered into the designs of Providence to call the sisters to the British Isles, English-speaking sisters were at once found ready for the undertaking.

The first house of the sisters in these countries was opened in Drogheda in 1855, at the urgent request of the Most Rev. Dr. Dixon, Primate of all Ireland. Two years afterwards the first house in England was founded at Sheffield. Scotland followed in 1864, when the Lanark house was established.

Although Ireland was the first to receive the sisters, the houses have not grown rapidly, owing, no doubt, to the excellent institutes already flourishing.

At the end of 1898 there were 8 houses in Ireland, 6 in Scotland, and 37 in England, all united in one province established in 1885, having its novitiate and central house in Mill Hill, London, N.W.

The following table gives a list of the houses and works of the sisters :—

SUMMARY OF THE SISTERS' HOUSES.

Country.	Place.	Year Founded.	Works.
1. Ireland	Drogheda, Fair St.	1855	School, industrial school and poor
2. Ireland	Dublin, N. William St.	1857	Orphanage, schools and poor
3. Ireland	Dublin, Fairview	1857	Insane asylum
4. England	Sheffield, Solly St.	1857	Schools and poor
5. England	London, Carlisle Place	1859	School, orphanage, poor
6. England	Liverpool, Little Crosby	1859	School and poor
7. Scotland	Lanark	1860	Schools, poor, hospital
8. England	Sheffield, Howard Hill	1861	Industrial school and day schools
9. England	Hereford, Bullingham	1861	Boarding school and orphanage
10. England	Liverpool, Beacon Lane	1863	Boys' orphanage
11. Scotland	Lanark, Smyllum	1864	Orphanage and school
12. Ireland	Cork, North Infirmary	1867	City hospital
13. England	Liverpool, Freshfield	1867	Girls' industrial school
14. England	Salisbury	1868	School, industrial school and poor

SUMMARY OF THE SISTERS' HOUSES—*continued.*

Country.	Place.	Year Founded.	Works.
15. England	London, 9 Lower Seymour St.	1868	School, orphanage, poor
16. England	London, Leyton, E.	1870	Boys' poor-law school
17. England	Yorkshire, Boston Spa	1871	Deaf-mute school
18. England	Liverpool, Brunswick Road	1872	Blind institution, poor
19. England	Hereford	1875	Orphanage, schools and poor
20. England	Plymouth	1875	Orphanage, poor and laundry
21. England	Manchester, Victoria Park	1877	Girls' industrial school
22. England	Darlington	1880	Schools and poor
23. England	London, Hatton Garden	1883	Schools and poor
24. England	London, Queen's Square	1883	Italian hospital
25. England	Dover	1883	School, poor and convalescent home
26. England	London, Mill Hill	1885	Novitiate house
27. England	Newcastle-on-Tyne, Ashburton House	1885	Girls' industrial school
28. England	York	1886	Parish school and poor
29. England	London, Mill Hill	1887	Boys' poor-law school
30. Scotland	Glasgow, White Vale	1887	Children's refuge
31. England	Wardour	1887	School and poor
32. Ireland	Dunmanway	1887	Schools and poor
33. England	Manchester	1887	Night school and poor
34. Ireland	Dublin	1888	Union hospitals
35. England	London, North Hyde	1889	Infirmary of orphanage
36. England	Torquay	1889	Boys' orphanage, poor
37. England	Liverpool, Everton Crescent	1890	Servants' refuge, home, poor, &c.
38. England	Hull	1890	Schools, poor and boys' home
39. England	Enfield	1890	Boys' orphanage
40. England	Newcastle-on-Tyne	1892	Junior boys' industrial school
41. Scotland	Dumfries	1892	Schools, poor
42. Ireland	Kildare, Celbridge	1892	Hospital and workhouse
43. England	Liverpool, Leyfield	1893	Girls' and infant poor-law school
44. Ireland	Dublin, Cabra	1893	Boys' and girls' poor-law school
45. England	Darlington	1893	Girls' industrial school
46. England	Manchester	1893	Servants' home, refuge, &c.
47. England	Durham, Tudhoe	1894	Girls' poor-law school
48. England	Birmingham	1895	Servants' home, poor, &c.
49. England	Preston, Fulwood	1896	Boys' poor-law school
50. Scotland	Edinburgh	1898	Sick poor
51. Scotland	Dunfermline	1898	Schools and poor

SAINT VINCENT'S MISSIONARIES

UNITED STATES

Eastern and Western Provinces

Saint Vincent's spiritual sons and daughters were invited early in the century to take their part in the glorious work of the formation of the Church in the great land of the West.

William Louis Dubourg, conspicuous among the band of noble and splendid ecclesiastics that Providence selected as the great pioneers in laying the foundations of the North American Church, was born in the island of Saint-Domingo, and educated and ordained in France. He was for many years associated with the Sulpicians at Georgetown College, and afterwards at Saint Mary's College and Seminary in Baltimore. He subsequently became instrumental in introducing the two families of Saint Vincent into the United States, and never ceased to direct and guide them, and, with all the tenderness of a father, to provide for their best interests.

In 1812 he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of Louisiana, which at that time extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the northern lakes, including the immense territory west of the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains and beyond, even to the Pacific Ocean. Father Dubourg resolved to go to Rome in quest of labourers for his Master's vast vineyard.

He reached the Eternal City in 1815, just after the venerable Pontiff Pius VII. had, after his second exile, entered Rome in triumph, and when Napoleon had sunk to rise no more.

William Louis Dubourg, during his stay in the capital of Christendom, resided at the house of the Vincentian Fathers at Monte Citorio, where he at once, with his keen eye, saw around him the materials required for his apostolic work, and, sighing, he said, "Oh that I could secure for my poor needy Louisiana such priests as these!"

Very soon we find him prostrate at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, exclaiming: "Holy Father, without the help of some good priests I shall be totally unable to administer a diocese that is almost without limits, and I must resign the charge."

He explained to the Pope his ardent wishes to have Saint

Vincent's missionaries. His Holiness approved of his project, which was finally, but not without opposition and great difficulty, carried out. Father Dubourg was consecrated Bishop of New Orleans on the 24th September 1815, and on the 14th October he, with his band of missionaries—chief among whom were Fathers Felix de Andreis, of sainted memory, Joseph Rosati, in after years the first Bishop of Saint-Louis, and John Baptist Acquaroni—had a farewell audience with the aged Pontiff, who bestowed from the fulness of his heart his parting benediction, and on the 21st of the same month they left Rome amidst tears and prayers and blessings.

By the direction of the Bishop, who was detained in Europe in the interests of his diocese, they passed through France to take charge of such other recruits as the Bishop could muster in that country, and through Italy, and after some difficulties and delays this vanguard of Saint Vincent's little army embarked on the 12th June 1816 at Bordeaux in an American brig bound for Baltimore.

They formed a party of twelve, counting secular priests, as well as lay-brothers and postulants. During the voyage mass was celebrated daily when the weather permitted; on Sundays and holidays high mass and vespers were sung in the solemn old Gregorian chant familiar to those who attend service at Monte Citorio. The divine office was recited in common. Night and morning prayers, the rosary, spiritual reading, Sacred Scripture, regular hours of study, silence and recreation entered into the daily programme, with a *horarium*, or order of the day, as regularly observed as in the most edifying seminary.

They arrived at Baltimore the 26th July, the octave day of the feast of Saint Vincent. Bishop Dubourg had changed their destination from New Orleans to Saint-Louis, which they safely reached.

The property of the Barrens, situated eighty miles south of Saint-Louis, and twelve miles from the Mississippi, was purchased, and temporary residences were at once erected. In after years a beautiful chapel was added with many other commodious buildings.

The tree spread its branches and blossomed everywhere through the land. God was glorified and innumerable souls were saved. Father Giustiniani, of noble family and happiest

memory, with his able countrymen, joined in to reap the harvest. Other nationalities too were not slow to give a helping hand. The names of these, who have long since passed to their well-earned rest: John Timon, Visitor of the then Province of the United States and first Bishop of Buffalo, and his distinguished successor in both high capacities, Stephen Vincent Ryan; John Mary Odin, forced in all his saintliness and profound humility into the Archbishopric of New Orleans; John J. Lynch, appointed Archbishop of Toronto, and Thaddeus Amat, Bishop of Montery; Robert E. V. Rice; John Quigley; Mariano Maller, &c.—each, with his own peculiar, edifying, splendid and touching history—are engraved on the memories of Saint Vincent's children in the United States, and are held as sacred throughout the length and breadth of the great American Church. Wonderful monuments of the piety, superior ability and taste, as well as of the burning zeal and heroic virtue of them and of their saintly predecessors, are to be found both in the present Eastern and Western Provinces into which the United States have been, for some years and with the happiest results, divided.

The following table gives a summary of the present houses of the two provinces and their respective personnels and works:—

Eastern Province of the United States.

Total Personnel—60 Priests, 21 Students, 12 Seminarists and 16 Lay-Brothers.

Place.	State.	Year.	Works.
Germantown (Centre House)	Pa.	1851	Parish, missions, novitiate, studies and apostolic school
Baltimore	Md.	1850	Parish
Brooklyn	N. Y.	1868	Dioc. sem., parish and college
Emmitsburg	N. Y.	1850	Parish
Niagara	N. Y.	1856	College, seminary, missions and retreats

WESTERN PROVINCE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Total Personnel—59 Priests, 47 Students, 20 Seminarists and 18 Lay-Brothers.

Place.	State.	Year.	Works.
Perryville (Centre House)	Mo.	1818	Parish, missions, novitiate and studies
Cape Girardeau	Mo.	1838	Parish and seminary
Chicago	Ill.	1875	Parish and missions
Kansas City	Mo.	1888	Parish
La Salle	Ill.	1838	Parish and missions
Los Angelos	Cal.	1865	Parish and college
New Orleans	La.	1849	Parish
New Orleans	La.	1858	Parish
Saint-Louis	Mo.	1818	Parish and missions
Saint-Louis	Mo.	1893	Dioc. seminary

SISTERS OF CHARITY

PROVINCE OF THE UNITED STATES

1809–1899

Elizabeth Ann Bayley, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the United States, was born in New York City, August 28, 1774, nearly two years before the declaration of American Independence. Her parents, non-Catholics, were American by birth, and of the highest social standing. Death deprived Elizabeth in her third year of her excellent mother; but in her father, Dr. Richard Bayley, a man of sterling integrity, brilliant scholarship and rare benevolence, she found a wise and tender guide, whose paternal solicitude secured her the thorough and complete education suited to her position in society. Ardent and affectionate in disposition and gifted with superior talents, Miss Bayley profited fully by her many advantages. Following the example of those around her, she attended the Protestant Episcopal Church, in which she had been baptized, but bigotry and prejudice could have no influence over so noble a character.

In her twentieth year she married Mr. William Seton, a respectable merchant of New York. Mr. Seton died December 27, 1803, while visiting Italy for his health, which had been

shattered by trials resulting from financial reverses. His death left his widow, with five small children, almost destitute in a strange land. In her hour of bereavement Mrs. Seton found in the Filicchi family of Leghorn generous and devoted friends, who welcomed her with sincere sympathy. The Messrs. Filicchi ranked high in mercantile life; these truly Christian gentlemen, ornaments to the Catholic religion, were mainly instrumental in a conversion which was to be a matter of deep interest to many.

On her return to America, Mrs. Seton found herself in a painfully unsettled state of mind, but grace finally triumphing in the desperate struggle, she was received into the true Church on Ash-Wednesday, 1805. This step severed all ties between the fervent convert and the numerous wealthy Protestant relatives of her husband. Encouraged by Mr. Antony Filicchi, her noble friend and benefactor, she now cherished the hope that, with her three little girls, she might be admitted into some convent, employing her talents in the instruction of youth, while her children could be thoroughly trained in the Catholic religion. This hope was indulged rather as a delightful dream, for it appeared too much happiness to be enjoyed during her earthly pilgrimage. But her thoughts were more practically directed towards it by Rev. William V. Dubourg, of the Order of Saint Sulpice, then President of Saint Mary's College, Baltimore. Having visited New York in 1806, he was offering the Holy Sacrifice in Saint Peter's Church, when a lady presented herself at the communion-railing, and, bathed in tears, received the Blessed Sacrament at his hands. Struck with the uncommon deportment and piety of the communicant, he rightly judged that it was Mrs. Seton, of whose conversion and edifying life he had heard.

Scarce had he put the question to the pastor that morning at breakfast, when a gentle tap at the door was heard, and the next moment Mrs. Seton was introduced, and knelt before the priest of God to receive his blessing. Entering into conversation with her respecting her two sons and her intentions in their regard, he learned from her the views and wishes stated above, and the expectation she had of removing with her three daughters to Canada. Father Dubourg, a man of enlarged views and remarkable enterprise, suggested that her scheme might be realised in the United States. Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, also Rev. Fathers Matignon and Cheverus of Boston, were of the same

opinion. Through F. Dubourg, these distinguished clergymen advised Mrs. Seton "to wait the manifestation of the Divine will—the will of a Father who could not let go the child afraid to step alone." The wise forethought of Dr. Matignon led him to believe that, in the designs of Providence, Mrs. Seton was called to be the instrument of some special services to the Church in her own country. "I have only to pray God," he wrote her, "to bless your views and His, and to give you the grace to fulfil them for His greater glory. *You are destined, I think, for some great good in the United States, and here you should remain.* For the rest, God has His moments which we must not seek to anticipate, and a prudent delay only brings to maturity the good desires which He awakens within us."

Mrs. Seton gratefully accepted the invitation of F. Dubourg, who assured her that her two sons would be admitted free into Saint Mary's College. He offered her at the same time the charge of a school, which the Sulpicians had long desired to form, in Baltimore. A small house contiguous to their chapel seemed adapted to the purpose. Accordingly Mrs. Seton left New York, arriving in Baltimore, June 16, 1808, and heard mass in Corpus Christi Chapel, that of the Sulpicians, on the very day of the Feast.

Mrs. Seton's removal to Baltimore to conduct a female academy added to the interest excited by her conversion. When she commenced her institution she had no thought of forming a Society whose members would be specially consecrated to the service of God. In the autumn of 1808, however, the designs of Providence began to manifest themselves more particularly in her regard. A young lady of Philadelphia, Miss Cecilia O'Conway, wishing to renounce the world, was preparing to cross the Atlantic, and when informed of Mrs. Seton's intentions, changed her plans, deciding to remain in America. Her father accompanied her to Baltimore, and offered her to Mrs. Seton as a child whom he consecrated to God. On December 7, Miss O'Conway became her first companion, and assisted in the school then under her charge.

About this time Mr. Samuel Cooper was a student in Saint Mary's Seminary, preparing for the sacred ministry. He owned some property, and was inspired to follow literally the Gospel maxim: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me." One morning immediately after receiving Holy

Communion, Mrs. Seton felt a strong inclination to dedicate herself to the care of poor female children, and to organise some plan for this purpose that might be continued even after her death. Communicating her thoughts to F. Dubourg, she said: "This morning, after my communion, I thought if my Saviour would but give me the care of poor little children, no matter how poor, and Mr. Cooper, who was directly before me at his thanksgiving, the money, for the bringing up of poor little children to know and love God!" F. Dubourg, joining his hands, observed that it was strange, for Mrs. Seton had not mentioned the subject to any one else. "Mr. Cooper," said he, "spoke to me this very morning of his thoughts being all for poor children's instruction, and that he would give his money for that purpose, and that he wondered if Mrs. Seton would be willing to undertake it." Struck at the coincidence of their views, the good priest requested them each to reflect upon the subject for one month, and then acquaint him with the result.

There was no interchange between Mrs. Seton and Mr. Cooper in relation to their wishes, and at the expiration of the time they both returned, separately, to F. Dubourg, both renewing the views expressed before, and Mr. Cooper offering a portion of his temporal means, ten thousand dollars, and the other, her devoted service for the relief of the poor and suffering members of Jesus Christ. The providence of God in behalf of the American Church was so clearly indicated in the circumstances just related, that little room was left for deliberation.

Bishop Carroll gave his warmest approbation. In the question of the locality, F. Dubourg was anxious to have the institution in Baltimore, but Mr. Cooper gently insisted upon the selection of Emmitsburg as a more convenient situation, and taking his words as prophetic, the good priest replied, "Let it then be Emmitsburg;" and on a visit to that part of the country shortly after, he bought the land now held by the Sisters of Charity, and known as Saint Joseph's Valley, at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, half a mile from the village, and two miles from Mount Saint Mary's College. At that time there was on the farm only a very small stone building. The property was made over to Rev. William V. Dubourg, Rev. John Dubois, and Samuel Cooper. Like Mrs. Seton, Father Cooper was a

convert from Anglicanism. After his ordination, in 1818, he was for a time pastor of Emmitsburg. He died in Bordeaux, France, 1843, poor, because he had reduced himself to indigence by his munificent charities.

On June 2, 1809 (feast of Corpus Christi), the Sisters appeared for the first time at public service in their religious costume, receiving the Divine Sacrament of the altar as the seal of their consecration to God, and gladdening the hearts of all who witnessed this edifying scene so full of promise to the Church.

On July 31, 1809, Mother Seton and her nine companions took possession of their humble dwelling, a small stone house, one storey, with a garret, at Emmitsburg, Maryland, the cradle of the Community in the United States. August 10, the first mass was offered at Saint Joseph's by Rev. William Dubourg, Superior, who, that same day, opened the first retreat for the sisters, and on August 30 the first council met. On February 20, 1810, the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession to the new wooden house, not yet plastered. A regular course of instruction was opened February 22, many pupils having been received from the village and surrounding country. The first High Mass was arranged for March 19.[1]

Having seen the advantages which must result from a union with the Community founded by Saint Vincent de Paul in France, her spiritual advisers solicited that union. Bishop Flagét of Kentucky, when about to sail for France in 1810, was requested to make overtures to that effect to the Superiors in France, who took a lively interest in the proposal, and Sisters Bizeray, Woirin and Chavin were appointed to go and train the American sisters to the usages and spirit of the Paris Community. They were

[1] In the early days at Emmitsburg, on one occasion Mr. Fleming, from whom the farm had been purchased, wished to break the bargain with the sisters, and threatened to do so in default of a certain payment which he demanded should be made in *Gold Eagles*, being convinced that Mother Seton would find it impossible to meet the payment. She consulted with a friend, Mr. Hughes, who kindly volunteered his services. He rode on horseback to Philadelphia, received the money from Father Cooper, returned to Baltimore, gathered more Eagles, and arrived in due time at Saint Joseph's. The money was all in Gold Eagles, packed in a small trunk, which Mr. Hughes carried before him on horseback. Whilst he was eating his dinner in a back room, Fleming presented himself at the front door, and was astonished to hear from Mother Seton that she was prepared to meet his demand.

at Bordeaux, ready to embark, when the Government forbade them to leave France. Bishop Flagét was obliged to return without them, bringing only a copy of the rules, and a young French cleric destined in the designs of God to be the expounder of these rules, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté. Rev. J. B. David succeeded Rev. W. Dubourg as Superior, and in 1811 Rev. John Dubois was appointed. During the fifteen years that he held the office, Father Dubois laboured to impress upon the Community the character and spirit of the Daughters of Saint Vincent de Paul, whom he had known in France, where he had himself forty Sisters of Charity under his care. He translated and wrote out the rules brought by Bishop Flagét from France in 1810.

In 1814 sisters were asked to take charge of an orphan asylum in Philadelphia, and in 1817 a similar request came from New York City. That same year, on his return from Rome, where he had been consecrated, Bishop Dubourg visited Saint Joseph's; he found there thirty sisters struggling amid poverty and privations, but inexpressibly happy; the pupils of the Academy numbered seventy, and orphans at home and abroad were sheltered from the frowns of a pitiless world. A stately tree had sprung up from the little mustard-seed which he had been instrumental in sowing. Thenceforward there was a simultaneous call for sisters for asylums, schools, hospitals, &c.; the field of labour was widening already, as if to verify the emphatic words uttered by Mr. Cooper: "*Sir, this establishment will be at Emmitsburg, and thence it will extend throughout the United States.*"[1]

The saintly Foundress, Mother Seton, was called to her reward, January 4, 1821, in the forty-seventh year of her age. She died in poverty, but rich in faith and good works. The title of *Mother*, conferred by Bishop Carroll, was borne by her successors.

In 1826 Rev. Louis R. Deluol was appointed Superior.

[1] As a further mark of the Divine protection over the Community at Saint Joseph's, it is worthy of remark that an effort was made by Mr. Emmit, who formerly owned the land belonging to the sisters, with a large portion of the surrounding country, to recover the possession of it. Against this scheme of injustice Mother Seton had recourse to prayer. One morning, after the sisters had invoked in a special manner the Divine protection, word was brought them that, while walking through the streets of the village which bore his name, though apparently in good health, Mr. Emmit had suddenly fallen and expired. His death put an end to the proceedings in court.

Meanwhile the sisters were asked for in many places. In 1832 Bishop Rosati, C.M., expresses his disappointment at not being able to get all the sisters needed in Saint-Louis. In 1838 he urges a new request for four more sisters to open a hospital. The good Bishop declares that the Sisters of Charity are destined by Providence to be the auxiliaries of the clergy, and God's instruments for the salvation of millions. On December 18, 1841, he wrote Mother Xavier, from Rome, that he had spoken to the Holy Father about the Sisters of Charity in the United States, and obtained for them a special blessing. He concludes with an important paragraph: "Before I left the United States I was not of opinion that a union of your Community with the sisters of France would be expedient; but now I think otherwise, and wish that it could be effected. I wrote to Father Timon and to the Archbishop about it."

Very Rev. John Timon, C.M., Visitor, had already written Father Deluol the result of his inquiries relative to the duties of Visitatrices of Provinces out of France.

On December 8, 1846, thirty-one sisters in New York City withdrew from the Community, and were constituted an independent body, owing allegiance to the Bishop of New York.

Attempts were frequently made to renew negotiations with France, but owing either to the misfortunes of the times or to other causes, nothing was effected, and the sisters remained under the direction of the Sulpicians of Baltimore; availing themselves, whenever occasions favoured, of the services of the Vincentians, introduced into the United States in 1816 by Rt. Rev. William V. Dubourg. Very Rev. John Timon, C.M., afterwards Bishop of Buffalo, gave retreats to the sisters, and held the Community in high esteem, his interest and zeal in its behalf never abating to his last breath.

The Union of the American "Sisters of Charity" with those of France had been the object of Very Rev. Louis Deluol's earnest desire for the three years previous to its happy accomplishment, which was finally effected, March 25, 1850, when the American sisters made their vows conformably to the custom received among the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

After the separation of the Sisters of Charity of New York from the parent stem, Father Deluol felt that unless the Society, whose Superior-General he was, could be affiliated to the Society

founded by Saint Vincent, which would give it permanency, it would eventually be divided into as many fragments as there were dioceses in the United States. From that moment he worked slowly but steadily for the desired union with the daughters of Saint Vincent. At last he broached the subject to Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore, who soon entered into his views.[1] Other bishops who were consulted also approved of the plan. Meanwhile the prayers of the sisters helped much to facilitate the accomplishment of God's designs over them. On August 15, 1849, Father Deluol received official information of the acceptance of his proposal asking for union with Saint Vincent's great family, and on September 7 he issued a circular acquainting the sisters with the fact. December 28, 1849, Very Rev. Mariano Maller, C.M., who had been appointed Director of the Province by Very Rev. J. B. Etienne, Superior-General, arrived at Saint Joseph's. He was accompanied by Rev. Francis Burlando. The latter succeeded to the office of Director and Superior, which he held for twenty years, till his death in 1873. His successors have been: Very Rev. Felix Guédry, Very Rev. Alexius Mandine, Very Rev. Sylvester V. Haire, and Very Rev. Robert A. Lennon, all of the Congregation of the Mission.

May 18, 1850, first delegation of Sisters from the United States to the Mother-house in Paris left Saint Joseph's for France. They arrived in Paris on the feast of the Sacred Heart. November 1, 1850, the successor of Saint Vincent, Very Rev. J. B. Etienne, issued his first circular to his American daughters. On November 7, 1850, Father Deluol sailed from Boston for France. Leaving these shores for ever, his heart was full of deep thankfulness and joy that God had enabled him, as he said, "to carry out the inspiration to put everything in its right place."

After the departure of Father Deluol it was found necessary to legalise the position of Very Rev. M. Maller. An official act was drawn up stating that, with the consent of the Archbishop of Baltimore, the Superior of the Priests of Saint Sulpice had renounced the authority which he had hitherto exercised.

The following is a copy of the Act:—

"It being understood that the Community of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's in the United States of America, by the general consent of its members, having been united to the Com-

[1] Father Deluol was the Archbishop's Vicar-General.

munity founded by Saint Vincent de Paul, under the name of Daughters of Charity; the Sisters in general having, on the 25th of March of this year, made a vow of obedience to the Superior-General of the said Company of Daughters of Charity, as well as the three other vows made in the Community:

"And it being understood that this union, effected with the approbation of Samuel Eccleston, Archbishop of Baltimore, and with that of the Superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, Protector of the Constitutions, and with that of the Superior-General of the Institute:

"Consequently—

"By the unanimous vote of the members of the Council, it is resolved, for the future government of the Community, for the administration of temporal goods, for the nomination of Superioress, who will henceforth have the title of Visitatrix, and for the appointment of the other officers and members of its Council, the sisters have adopted, and actually do adopt by this Act, the Constitutions of the Community founded by Saint Vincent de Paul, known in the Church under the name and title of *Puellæ Charitatis*, or *Congregatio Puellarum Charitatis*—'Daughters of Charity,' or 'Congregation of Daughters of Charity'—and they have revoked and do hereby revoke every clause of the former constitutions which would be contrary to those newly adopted.

"Sister Ann Simeon Norris,
"*Secretary of the Council.*
"Saint Joseph's, *November* 6, 1850.

"Approved.

"✠ Samuel,
"*Archbishop of Baltimore.*
"*November* 15, 1850."

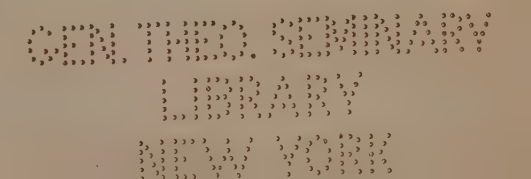
"The office of the Protector of the Community of the Sisters of Charity, exercised until the present by the Superior of the Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States, has ceased to exist.

"F. L'Homme,
"*Superior of the Priests of Saint Sulpice.*

"Approved.

"✠ Samuel,
"*Archbishop of Baltimore.*

"*November* 15, 1850."



After vespers, December 7, 1850, eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the sisters, including those of the Seminary, assumed the costume of the Community in France.

At that epoch the American branch, under Mother Etienne Hall, comprised 38 houses, 345 sisters. In February 1852 the defection of the Cincinnati Mission—six sisters—to form a separate Community took place. It was the only house that withdrew in consequence of the union with France.

The works of Saint Vincent have attained a marvellous development in the United States. During the Civil War, 1861–65, the sisters served in the military hospitals and on the battlefield. In the late Spanish-American War over 200 were in the service of the Government, for the care of the wounded and sick soldiers, both in the United States and in the Antilles. At the present date the Province numbers 1600 sisters; 115 establishments; infant asylums, 12; orphan asylums, 25; asylums with schools annexed, 12; schools, 33; hospitals, including 1 leper home, 33.

THE END

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